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PARKES

THE PLAGIARY "WARNED."

A

VINDICATION

OF

THE DRAMA, THE STAGE,

AND

PUBLIC MORALS,

FROM THE PLAGIARISMS AND COMPILATIONS OF THE

REV^D. JOHN ANGELL JAMES,

MINISTER OF CARR'S LANE CHAPEL, BIRMINGHAM:

IN A

LETTER TO THE AUTHOR.

"Who art thou that judgest another?"

The General Epistle of James. Chap. iv. v. 12.

"PLAGIARY. A Thief in Literature; one who steals the thoughts or writings of another." *Johnson's English Dictionary.*

"But steal not word for word, nor thought for thought,
For you'll be teaz'd to death, if you are caught!"

Bramston's Art of Politics. Dodsley's Collection.

Birmingham;

PUBLISHED BY J. DRAKE, NEW-STREET;

AND

BALDWIN, CRADOCK, AND JOY, PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.

1824.

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PREFACE.

THE Author of the following pages sincerely asserts that it is with great reluctance he intrudes on the Public. He has done so, impelled by a sense of *duty*. The subject is of no mean importance—the Influence of a Popular Amusement on PUBLIC MORALS.

The literary history of the Drama and the Stage records various periodical controversies on the effects of Dramatic representations and reading: it is not therefore probable that Mr. James has written any thing novel or particularly worthy publication: by parity of reasoning this remark would apply to these observations and comments on him; but there are *local* reasons which justify the publication of these pages.

First, a gross insult has been committed in Mr. James's publications on **SIXTY-FOUR** of the principal Inhabitants of **BIRMINGHAM**, the projectors and proprietors of the present Birmingham Theatre—a Public Company of Individuals, the most respectable and influential members of the several political and religious classes of the Town and neighbourhood. The author feels himself called upon in their behalf to justify their liberal and disinterested re-establishment of the Theatre, after its destruction by fire in 1820: and when it is known that he is not a Proprietor of the Birmingham Theatre, and had never entered the doors of that Theatre when this publication was commenced, he will not be considered as a partial or interested defender.

Secondly, as Mr. James is a Preacher of local popularity, possessing and exercising considerable influence, it is desirable that his admirers should form a just estimate of his talent, judgment, and

writings; they will have an opportunity of doing so in the perusal of these sheets. It has been reported that Mr. James considers he has hitherto enjoyed a triumphant argument, and that the flood of writing against him has made good his own positions: he may perhaps now revise that opinion. Added to these reasons there is yet one other motive which has led to this publication. If, as Mr. James contends, the **CHRISTIAN RELIGION** condemns Theatrical Amusements, and if notwithstanding they are innocent and rational, it then follows that man was not made for the **Christian Religion** although that Religion was made for man: the scandal of such an inference, and its infallible support of Scepticism (which Mr. James says is so prevalent) cannot but make it highly desirable to prove that the **Christian Religion** does **NOT** condemn them.

There are here brought to light some of the most extraordinary literary plagiar-

isms ever detected, which have necessarily called forth a corresponding censure, it has however been the studious object of the Author of the exposure to avoid all personality and invective; such he is sure has been his *intention*, whatever construction may be put on the performance when obliged to call things by their right names.

Bigotry, and the desire of inflaming the prejudices of Religious party-feeling have had no share in these pages, which seek not to create but to allay intolerance and to explode uncharitable opinions. Would that the Religious World could AGREE TO DIFFER!

The Author is not a "Play-Goer;" the last few years he has rarely entered a Theatre, not because the attraction of the Theatre had decreased, but because other objects of intellectual occupation and worldly calling had superseded its interest: he is therefore in some degree a disinterested Advocate, and his discrimi-

nation of the Abuses of the Stage is not blinded by habit or prejudice. He avows however, with unaffected fervour, his literary worship of SHAKESPEARE and BEN JONSON. Gratitude for early associations, and obligations towards those great Spirits of former ages—those Household Gods of Literature—command this his humble exertion in defence of the Drama.

But as the Author has before observed, his chief reasons for publication are the vindication of his fellow townsmen, and the assay of Mr. James. The flourishing existence and increasing popularity of the Drama and the Stage are a fair presumption that they will prosper without the Author's support, and survive the assaults of the Reverend John Angell James.

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LETTER

TO THE

REV^D. JOHN ANGELL JAMES.

Sir,

IN addressing this Letter to you, I beg to premise that I am not of the number of those who seek to degrade the Clerical Character; I wish to see the Ministers of the Gospel, whether Members of an Established or Dissenting Church, enjoy that elevated and influential rank in society, which superior education and sanctity of morals should secure to them. I also duly respect the institutions and ordinances of Religion, and highly estimate the value of religious *habits* in the young; and although I do not consider the external ceremonies of religion, or the notional ideas on certain niceties of speculative *belief* as Religion itself, yet the *forms* of religion *are* of

essential and serious importance: they are the “enamel of virtue,” and that pregnant sentence of Johnson’s cannot be too often enforced, that, “To be of no Church is dangerous: Religion, of which the rewards are distant, and which is animated only by Faith and Hope, will glide by degrees out of the mind, unless it be invigorated by external ordinances, by stated calls to worship, and the salutary influence of example.”—But on the other hand, it was well observed by Erasmus, of the opposite extreme, that the profusion and immoderate value of External Ceremonies teach us backwards, and bring us back from Christ to Moses. Muffling Christianity up in forms and mysteries is only burying its beauties and destroying its utility. “To persuade men to the Life of Christ is the pith and kernel of all Religion: and those many *Opinions* about Religion, that are every where so eagerly contended for on all sides, where *This* does not lie at the bottom, are but so many shadows fighting with one another.”* I have made these brief preliminary remarks, Sir, because I know it is fashionable to confound reflections on the Ministers of Religion with the disbelief of religion itself—as if it was not possible to distinguish between the Minister

* Cudworth. Sermon before the House of Commons. 1647.

and the object of ministration—and that you might at once clearly perceive, which doubtless you do, the nature of my own individual belief—viz. that I judge of a man's Religion by its *quality*, not by its *quantity*.

I beg leave also, in the opening of this letter, distinctly to disavow all intention of reflection or insinuation against your *private* character. I allow the excellence of *that* by common report, although I have not the honour of a personal acquaintance. I do not question the sincerity of your religious zeal, and I am even willing to admit the partial good effect of your Public labours in the Pulpit. It is your PUBLIC character as an AUTHOR, which you have voluntarily placed at the bar of public opinion, that I have now to assay; and as you are the popular oracle of a numerous congregation, it is unquestionably important that your pretensions should be submitted to the tests of Reason and Truth. Had your labours been confined to your Chapel I should not have interfered with them, but as you have extended the circle of their influence by publishing your compositions, or more correctly speaking, what you have put forth as *your* compositions, the responsibility and consequences of this letter rest on yourself.

When a man prints and publishes, two things are presupposed, first, that the compositions so given to the world are the works of the author whose name appears in the Title page; and next, that the author considers them above mediocrity.

Now Sir, in the first place, as to your attacks on the Public Amusements and character of your fellow Townsmen and Countrymen, I shall prove in the sequel that you are an incomparable **PLAGIARY**: and in the second place, that more defamation and illiterate ignorance have seldom been exhibited.

As to the vice of Plagiarism I shall say but little: the moral turpitude of the offence is differently estimated by the moral apprehensions of different persons. In a Minister of the Gospel of **TRUTH** I cannot, however, but consider it as a peculiarly disgraceful offence. It is appropriating more *talents* to yourself than you can honestly claim: it is an injustice to the reputation and rights of the real author: nothing can justify the falsehood or the meanness; you have no right ever to do evil that good may come. It has ever received the condemnation and contempt of all past and present ages, and I trust it will continue so to do.

Since my attention was accidentally drawn to three of your publications, the more immediate objects of the present pamphlet, I have read what you have committed to the press at various times: a greater mass of compilation and disingenuous use of other authors I have never had the labour to read, and I trust I never shall again. Your Sermon on the attraction of the Cross, which first gave you literary distinction, is a most palpable compilation of the metaphors and sentiments of some of our best writers, and particularly of the most celebrated passages of forensic eloquence. Should you have the temerity to dispute this, I will publish the proof; in the meantime, it is beside my present purpose, and I am certain, that the following sheets will obtain for the assertion the credence of my Readers, without the necessity of a particular citation.

The works which are now the subject of my animadversion, are—

1. Youth Warned. A Sermon preached in Carr's Lane Meeting-House, January 4th, 1824, and addressed particularly to Young Men. Birmingham, 1824.
2. The Christian Father's Present to his Children, two volumes. London, 1824.
3. The Scoffer Admonished. Being the substance of Two Sermons preached in Carr's Lane Meeting-House, July 18th, and August 1st, 1824. Birmingham, 1824.

The first point I shall dispute with you is, the present state of Public Morals and literature. In page 13, of "Youth Warned," you write—

"Inflammatory novels, stimulating romances, lewd poetry, immoral songs, satires against religious characters, and arguments against revelation, form in general, the works consulted by corrupt and vicious youth, and by which they become still more vicious. Never did the press send forth streams of greater pollution than at this time. Authors are to be found, of no mean character for talent, who pander to every corruption of the youthful bosom. Almost every vice has its high priest, to burn incense on its altar, and to lead its victims, decked with the garlands of poetry or fiction, to their ruin."

In p. 17 of the "Scoffer Admonished," you give the following infamous and over-charged picture of society—

"How often is the *social circle* the scene of this unhal-
lowed sport: and the entertainment of the convivial party
heightened by profane ridicule. Religion, like her divine
Author, when he was led into Pilate's hall, to be a laughing
stock to the Roman soldiers, is introduced only to furnish
merriment for the company. One calls her an impostor,
practising her arts on the credulity of mankind; another
holds up the vices of her false disciples as chargeable upon
her; a third tells a ludicrous anecdote of one of her sincere
and honourable votaries; then derided by all, defended by
none, with no one to speak on her behalf, and not permitted
to speak for herself, she stands, like the Man of Sorrows, a
silent object of derision, the swearer's jest, the drunkard's
song, yet majestic still in grief, and dignified amidst sur-

rounding scorn. How much of tavern, ale-house mirth is derived from this impious source. What a supply of merriment would be cut off from the sons of Belial if religion and all the subjects connected with it, were suddenly, by some mysterious power operating upon their mind, either forgotten or dreaded. Infatuated and miserable men! Can ye find nothing less sacred than this to give a relish to your wine? Will nothing less poisonous serve as an infusion into your cups? Has the social circle no charms or power to please unless the scoffer be there? Has wit no poignancy, genius no brilliancy, satire no sting, irony no point, humour no pleasantry, jesting no spirit, except scoffing at religion be practised? Must the voice of the scorner, rouse the slumbering genius of mirth, and all be flat and insipid, till his perverted fancy yield the salt? It is not enough that ye can be gamesters, and drunkards, and swearers, but ye must be libellers and calumniators also; and even then, will nothing less serve as the object of your scandal, than piety and the pious?"

Now Sir, either this "Social Circle" must have been witnessed by yourself or reported to you by some friend: if by a member, you could not consider it worthy of belief; and if by a convert, I should receive such a story with allowance as the exaggerated picture of his past sins, by way of increasing the merit of his present reformation; I should consider the narrator as a sinner past saving. But however this may be, it is a mere false picture, and exists only in the disordered imagination of some religious fanatic, or of some menda-

cious knave who has imposed his contemptible narration on your credulity. What, Sir, can be your motive in joining this old “Hue and Cry” of *villanizing* Mankind? Is it to enhance the necessity and value of your own services? “There is a certain List of Vices committed in all ages and declaimed against by all Authors, which will last as long as Human Nature! or digested into common places may serve for any theme, and never be out of date until dooms-day.”* “The badness of the times has been a common topic of complaint in every *age*, and that they are growing worse continually, is what some persons think themselves obliged to insist upon, with no less vehemence; how hard soever they find it to account for this in any respect.”†

“It has been so long the practice to represent literature as declining, that every renewal of this complaint now comes with diminished influence. The public has been so often excited by a false alarm, that at present the nearer we approach the threatened period of decay, the more our security increases.”‡

* Sir Thomas Brown's *Vulgar Errors*. 1646.

† Law's *Theory of Religion*. 1750.

‡ Goldsmith's *Enquiry into the present State of Polite Learning*.

If it were necessary, Sir, I could produce regular chronological lamentations over the continual moral degeneracy of Mankind, from the cessation of the Flood to the present day: the disease, therefore, cannot be a galloping consumption, or ere this the world would have become one dreary waste. That the CLERGY, of all classes of detractors, should join in this sad complaint—of leaving Christianity in a worse condition than they found it—is indeed extraordinary; the reflection on themselves who have been educated and paid to advance the religious character of the People, cannot but be evident; and thus to profess not to be able to keep them from backsliding, cannot but make good the argument of the Society of Friends, and also of the Freethinkers, who contend that the office of a Priesthood is one of unproductive labour.

“ It reflects (says Milton) to the disrepute of our Ministers also, of whose labours we should hope better, and of the proficiency which their flock reaps by them, than that after all this light of the Gospel which is, and is to be, and all this continual preaching, they should be still frequented with such an unprincipled, unedify'd, and laic rabble, as that the whiff of every new Pamphlet should stagger them out of their catechism and Christian

walking." But, Sir, to be serious; can it be believed that vice increases in a geometrical progressive ratio with the increase of knowledge? Has the establishment of Charity and Sunday Schools, of National and Lancasterian Systems of Education, the increased circulation of religious magazines and tracts had no effect in instructing and moralizing the People? Has the distribution of Bibles, your Missionary and periodical collections, had no effect on Public Morals? Are Hospitals, Dispensaries, Charities suited to every want and misfortune of the Poor, no proofs of increasing humanity and benevolence? Is not the reprint of the standard works of England's Worthies, and the vast influx of periodical publications connected with the Arts and Sciences, evidence of the moral and intellectual progress of your Countrymen? Can any Country in the World, or could any past age boast the moral habits or information of British Mechanics and Artizans? Is a state of profound Peace, and the extraordinary extension of Trade and Commerce from the horrors and wickedness of War, no symptom of National improvement—or is it only that the People have advanced in every other respect—save respect for their Religion and its Ministers? If this *were* the *fact*, what would be the infallible inference?

that however your calling in life suited your own interest, it ill accorded with the interests of your country!

It was the original and profound remark of BACON,* *Antiquitas Seculi, Juventus Mundi*—that the Antiquity of the World was its Infancy. You libel real antiquity without being aware of it, and calumniate the improving times in which you have the privilege to be born, by thus eulogising the moral character of our ancestors, at the expence and aspersion of posterity and your contemporaries: and I leave you to estimate the spiritual pride which dares thus to set itself up the Censor of the age, and to anticipate judgments to come. If I understand rightly the necessity and divine favour of Revelation, it was to add to the natural light already in the world; and if we are to interpret literally the prophecies and intentions of the Great Messenger of Heaven, it was the advancement of the moral improvement and happiness of his creatures. God, Sir, does not create the Human Mind now with less advantages than formerly: Nature and Conscience still exercise their prerogatives. As Antiquity, therefore, in fact consists in the old age of the World, not in the youth of it; as we are the fathers, not the children

* *De Aug. Scient. L. i. c. 5.*

of time, abandon this stale and unprofitable declamation: "in disgracing the present times therefore, you disgrace Antiquity properly so called ;"* Truth is the Daughter of Time. Now, Sir, allow me to recommend you to read that admirable portion of Law's Theory of Religion—"The Progress of Natural Religion and Science, or the continual Improvement of the World in general:" his text, Sir, from Solomon, is not unsuitable to the present occasion—*Say not thou, What is the cause that the former Days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.* ECCLES. vii. 10.

"'Twixt Blasphemy and Cant—the two
Rank ills with which this age is curst—
We can no more tell *which* is worst,
Than erst could Egypt, when so rich
In various plagues, determine which
She thought most pestilent and vile."

Fables for the Holy Alliance.

With this exordium I shall open the more immediate object of the present strictures on your publication: to commence *ab origine*, I shall quote from your first printed Sermon, "YOUTH WARNED," your first denunciation of the Drama and the Stage.

* Hakewill, Apol.

"4. The *recreations and amusements* of young men who live in sinful pursuits are of the same nature as their reading, conversation, and company, i. e. polluted and polluting. The *theatre* is generally frequented by them; the theatre, that corrupter of public morals; that school where nothing good and every thing bad is learnt; that resort of the vicious, and seminary of vice; that broad and flowery avenue to the bottomless pit. Here a young man finds no hinderances to sin, no warnings against irreligion, no mementos of judgment to come; but on the contrary, every thing to inflame his passions, to excite his criminal desires, and to gratify his appetites for vice. The language, the music, the company, are all adapted to a sensual taste, and calculated to demoralize the mind. Multitudes of once comparatively innocent and happy youth, have to date their ruin for both worlds, from that hour when their feet first trod the polluted precincts of a theatre. Till then they were ignorant of many of the ways of vice, and had no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. That fatal night which first brought them before the stage, was the dreadful season of their initiation into the mysteries of iniquity. Then they fell from morality and respectability, and continued falling deeper and deeper in vice, till earth tired of the sickening load of their corruption, heaved them from her lap; and hell from beneath moved to meet them at their coming. When therefore, a young man acquires a taste for theatrical representations, and gratifies his propensity, I consider his moral character in imminent peril."

To this, in the publication of your Sermon, you append the following note.

"It is by no means the author's intention to affirm, that all who frequent the theatre are in the usual acceptation of the term, vicious persons. Far be it from him to prefer an accusation so extensive and

unfounded as this. No doubt many most amiable and moral individuals are among the admirers of dramatic representation. That such persons receive no contamination from the scenes they witness, or the language they hear, is no stronger proof that the stage is not immoral in its tendency and effects, than that there is no contagion in the plague, because some constitutions resist the infection. That persons fenced in by every conceivable moral defence and restraint, should escape uninjured, is saying little; but even in *their* case, I will contend that the *mind* is not altogether uninjured. Is it possible for an imperfect moral creature, and such are the best of us, to hear the irreverend appeals to heaven, the filthy allusions, the anti-christian sentiments, which are uttered during the representation of even our purest plays, and hear this for *amusement*, without some deterioration of *mental* purity? And it should be remembered that none but the *pure in heart* shall see God. But let us conceive of a young man going alone and unprotected to a theatre, or in the company of others of his own age, and after having his passions inflamed with all he has seen and heard within, then returning home through the crowds of well-dressed prostitutes which infest the purlieus of every theatre. *Is this a school to improve his morals?* Yes, the morals of the brothel. The advocates of the stage should be candid, and instead of talking about its improving the taste or the morals of the age, should frankly confess, what they cannot be ignorant of, that it is indeed a very dangerous place for young persons, but that it is an amusement of which they themselves are very fond, and that they are determined to enjoy it, whatever havoc it should make in the character of others. Or even admitting that occasionally some one were improved by theatrical satires on vice, though by the way, to laugh at vice is not the best way of becoming virtuous, still will they not confess that for this one case of improvement, a *thousand* cases of ruin could be found?"

On the plagiarisms and declamation of these extracts I shall say nothing, as the substance is repeated in a more elaborate and serious work,—THE CHRISTIAN FATHER'S PRESENT TO HIS CHILDREN; but I leave my Readers to their own reflections on what must be the constituent character of *your* acquaint-

ance and followers, who cannot frequent an English Theatre, or witness "the representation of even our purest plays, without some deterioration of mental purity:"—such persons, Mr. James, belong to Dean Swift's description of *nice* people, who, ever suspecting impurities in the most unexceptionable works, must be creatures of most diseased and impure minds, which, thank God, Sir, the majority of intellectual beings are *not*.

You have thought proper, Sir, to denounce in terms of most bitter and indiscriminate invective, the character and works of LORD BYRON, the darling and wayward child of Genius. It is a remark of an old writer, that, if God has not more mercy on us than we have towards one another, it will ill fare with *all*. Lord Byron was early bereft of parents, and by nature and physical constitution was endowed with feelings and passions of difficult restraint: he was moreover born in a rank of society by no means favorable to the early discipline of the mind, and where temptation peculiarly exposed such a character to error and vice. The Superstition and Hypocrisy of the world appear early to have impressed a sensitive mind; and like thousands of others in the hatred and exposure of tyranny and hypocrisy, he failed to discriminate between real

Religion and the false pretences of Irreligion. It is impossible to justify part of his writings. But may my countrymen ever admire what you allow—"the exquisite pathos and peerless beauty of his works:" may they not seek to imitate or justify his failings; and may the Great Judge of all, *who loves mercy rather than vengeance*, judge with compassion and forgiveness the errors of Lord Byron, common to all of us—may his noble exertions in the cause of Freedom and Religion, in that classic and gallant land where Socrates taught and PAUL preached the UNKNOWN GOD, atone for his frailties, and ultimately place him with the spirits of just men made perfect. DE MORTUIS NIL NISI BONUM.

"No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose)
The bosom of his Father and his God."

In these preliminary strictures on your writings, you must allow that I have fairly quoted your own words. I shall pursue the same impartial course throughout this letter. I now proceed to your *second* work, one of the three subjects of my criticism. THE CHRISTIAN FATHER'S PRESENT TO HIS CHILDREN. This is your *magnum opus*, or work of digested and considerate publication, ad-

dressed to young People on education and moral culture. It is unnecessary that I should examine analytically its entire contents; in fact it contains much from your former sermons and tracts, inlaid in the text and notes. I shall, however, remark on some introductory chapters which precede your direct attack on the Drama and the Stage.

Your 14th chapter, of volume the second, treats on the subject of *Books*. It contains some most inconsistent, injudicious, and meagre directions generally, but particularly as to a course of reading on *History*. You recommend Hume; you speak of the "beautiful simplicity of his composition," and "his philosophical mode of analyzing character and tracing events:" you then add, "but unhappily, Hume was a confirmed infidel, and must be read with a mind ever upon its guard against the poison which he has infused into his narrative:" you say, that "happily, the deleterious infusion floats upon the surface, and may be therefore easily detected." You then, in a note at the bottom of the page, (6.) assert that, "Hume has so incorporated his infidelity with his history, that it is impossible to read the one without the other." This palpable confusion of the spirit of his *History* and his *Essays*, is truly ridiculous.

Now, I call upon you to point out one sceptical expression throughout Hume's History of England that can justify these silly observations. Had you really been versed in Hume's History, and in the annotations of his able commentators,* you would have justly said, that his High Church principles and prejudices occasionally disgrace the impartiality of an Historian, and were highly injurious to the Cause of *Religious* as well as of "Civil Liberty." You then add in the note alluded to—"MR. (Dr.) Lingard, a Roman Catholic author, is now publishing a very well written history of England, in which his views and feelings, as a catholic, are however sufficiently prominent." Thus you characterize a noble and admirable historical work, the labour of the author's life—a history of extraordinary, industrious, and impartial, research—as a

* Observations on Mr. Hume's History of England, 1778, by Dr. Joseph Towers, and reprinted in his works. "Brodie's History of the British Empire, including a particular examination of Mr. Hume's Statement relative to the character of the English Government, &c." 4 vols. Octavo, 1822, an excellent and valuable historical work. See also, "A List of Books recommended and referred to in the Lectures on Modern History, by Professor Smyth, of St. Peter's College, Cambridge." To witness and record the growing liberality of the times, and the oblivion of past illiberality, especially in the English Universities, is a most grateful observation: in this list of Books, DR. PRIESTLEY's invaluable Lectures on History are highly recommended for the "nature of Historical Authorities," and referred to in the University Lectures.

“very well written history!” You then add, that “An English History, in which there shall be the most sacred regard to the principles of pure morality, evangelical religion, and rational liberty, is still a desideratum in the literature of our country.” Do you mean to supply this desideratum? Do you ever expect an *inspired* History—that is to say, a History not written by a *Man* with certain natural and acquired prepossessions in favour of his own opinions and party? Do you not know that historical Truth is only to be discovered by a patient and candid perusal and comparison of the historical works by different political parties and religious sects? Do you not think that if you, for example, wrote a history, supposing you were able, that the Calvinistic and *Independent* complexion would be “sufficiently prominent?” What therefore was your course in your advice to young People but to recommend to them the diligent and dispassionate reading of *all* parties, and to direct them to the necessary works and collections? If you were competent to have done this, you ought to have particularized the works; and, if not competent to it, you had no pretension to the publication of such a directory as—
The Christian Father’s Present to his Children.

In p. 8, is the following—"In the department of *English composition*, ADDISON and JOHNSON, though moral writers, in the *usual* acceptation of the term, are not always correct in their principles, if indeed the New Testament is the standard of moral sentiments." As it is not likely that your works will supersede the Evidences of Christianity or the Rambler, or that the Public will recognize you as a Licensor of the Press over Addison and Johnson, I shall pass on to the conclusion of your sentence as follows:—"It is desirable to cultivate a good taste, and an elegant style of composition; and for this purpose, the productions of these two celebrated writers may be read, together with Burke on the Sublime, Alison on Taste, Blair's Lectures, and Campbell on Rhetoric." I only set out this passage to expose your ignorance. You subsequently rate the perusal of FICTION in any shape as impious and idle. Now can you have read Burke, Alison, Blair, or Campbell, and recommend them to young people as proper authors, at the same time that you condemn Dramatic and Poetic fiction? thus denouncing works of the imagination, and yet recommending volumes that expressly eulogize the Drama and poetry of our country! If you have read these authors, how defective must

be your memory to retain, or your judgment to appreciate; and if you have not, how marvellous your ignorance!—In the following page, 9, you proceed—“ Although the present age can boast the noble productions of such men as Scott, Southey, Campbell, and Wordsworth, whose poems every person of real taste will read, yet I recommend the more *habitual* perusal of Spencer and Milton among the *ancients!* and Cowper and Montgomery among the moderns: the two first for their genius, and the others for their piety.” So your judicious literary discrimination does not estimate MILTON so much for his *piety* as for his *genius!* The Author of Paradise Lost, Regained, and those delicious strains of piety in his minor poems and translations, is admired for his “genius,” and the morbid physical and religious melancholy of Cowper is recommended for its “piety!” Thank God, Sir, that “every person of real taste *will* read,” the poems of the four living poets you have so partially eulogized, and that “MILTON among the ancients” posterity will ever read for his genius *and* his piety; and Cowper for his poetic beauties, but with a charitable pity and allowance for the unfortunate malady which characterized his constitution and mind. You conclude this chapter with some heartless and

tasteless diatribes against *fiction*: I shall not accompany you, as the subsequent pages of this pamphlet will more particularly exhibit the important ends of works of the imagination, and fiction, on the taste and morals of the world.

I proceed to Chapter xv. "On amusements and recreation."—You denounce "killing flies," (query, fleas?) "Horse racing;" "all *field sports* of *every* kind;" (your own italics, p. 20,)—"Shooting, coursing, hunting, angling!" "What agony is inflicted in hooking a worm or a fish;" Spirit of old Izaak Walton, whose innocent amusements are thus denounced, and who hast told us how in thy contemplative moments the sweet feelings of piety pervaded thy soul—when "the nightingale, another of my airy creatures, breathes such sweet loud music out of her little instrumental throat, that it might make mankind to think that miracles are not ceased. He that at midnight, when the very labourer sleeps securely, should hear, as I have very often, the clear airs, the sweet descants, the natural rising and falling, the doubling, and redoubling of her voice, might well be lifted above earth, and say, Lord, what music hast thou provided for the saints in Heaven, when thou affordest bad men such music on Earth!"

Vermin, such as “Wolves, bears, serpents, are to be extirpated;” but not for the pleasure of killing them; if thinning them is not absolutely necessary, they are to be alive and at large on their “parole d’honneur.”

“Billiards and cards” are vicious games: “passion, petulance and sullenness, are always waiting *under* the table, ready to appear in the persons and conduct of the loser:” “scenes have been described to me a disgrace to the genteel party in the drawing room:” “serious misunderstandings have arisen from this source between man and wife:” “How many have taken up the pistol or the poison, and have rushed with all their crimes about them, from the gambling-table to the—fiery lake in Hell.”!!! Has *this* been described to you, Sir, by any Spectator?

You then run down “Balls, Routs and Concerts.” p. 23. The “mode of dress,” “the nature of the employment; the dissipating tendency of the music, the conversation, and the elegant uproar”—all these fill you with dismay; that is to say, the mere *representation* of what goes on (for you never pretend to have been present yourself at any,) outrage your feelings. Exquisite sentimentality, and audacious ignorance, which can print, “Let there be a love once acquired for these *elegant*!

recreations by any female, and from my heart, I pity the man who is destined to be her husband." p. 24. I should indeed, Sir, pity the elegant woman thrown away upon *you* who cannot appreciate the innocent accomplishments of the female character.

You then say, that however moral these amusements may be in the Upper-ranks, "yet what mischief is produced to their humble imitators, who attend the assemblies which are held in the barn or the ale-house." p. 24. "I look upon dancing among these to be a practice fraught with immorality:" this you illustrate not by an allusion to King David, but to the case of Mary Ashford!

After this *elegant* finish to all the popular amusements and manly sports of your Countrymen, you proceed to tell us what, in your liberality, you *will* allow. Well is it for England that you are not the modern "Master of the Revels," and that your "Book of Sports" is not the only latitude of British Law.

"My opinion of the STAGE I shall reserve for a separate chapter. In the mean time I shall reply to a question which, no doubt, ere this you are ready to ask, "what amusements I would recommend."—

You "recommend" to young Persons, by

way of "strengthening the body and improving the mind," "a Country ramble amidst the beauties of nature." I guess, Sir, your Females would be very likely to fall into men traps, and your juvenile males to expiate their ambulatory trespasses against the Game Laws and the Vagrant Act on some County tread mill for the space of one Calendar month! What we are to do in the iron wilds of Staffordshire you do not inform us, unless tumbling down an obsolete coal pit is a religious recreation, and a warning against the pit falls of Satan. The mental prescription you have written in this curious receipt book is, "Seek for that thirst after knowledge, which, when the Soul is jaded with the dull and daily round of secular affairs, shall conduct her to the fountains of thought contained in the *well-stocked* library." "My father's greeting smile; my mother's fond embrace; the welcome of my brothers and my sisters; the kind looks, the fond enquiries, the interesting, though *unimportant* conversation of all at home would recruit my strength and recreate my mind:" excellent substitutes for marbles, whipping tops, cricket and foot ball, and Mr. Mathews's "At Home!"—If you have amusements and no religion, you have "the joy of fools, which as Solomon says, is but as 'the crackling

of thorns beneath the pot.'” Here endeth your 15th Chapter, on amusements and recreations.

Had I not set forth your own words, Mr. James, few (out of the pale of your own Church) would have believed such extraordinary ignorance of Human-nature could have been exhibited by you, much less published to the world. And strange it is that you did not yourself perceive the glaring inconsistency of first representing mankind in so base and hopeless a plight, and then prescribing such a perfectibility as even no German illuminati ever dreamed was possible! Human nature is not to be controlled so easily as may be imagined; you cannot root out the Passions if you would, and you ought not if you could; their office in a probationary state of existence is too important and too salutary to be dispensed with:—they are the refreshing gales that purify the moral atmosphere of a being never designed by nature for a cloister or a cowl. The manifestations of passion, it is true, may be cloaked, but human nature will remain unchanged—she may be masked but not transformed—a thick veil of hypocrisy may be assumed—the garb of exterior sanctity may be worn—the phylacteries may be made broad, or, as Lord Monboddo has said, “dunghills

may be spread with white linen, but will not become clean in consequence of such a covering."

Do you not perceive that to realize (supposing for the sake of argument it *was* possible) your projected scheme of morality, you would invert the whole order of Society, turn the world upside down, and require the total suppression of half the passions, feelings and sympathies of mankind—springs of human action more or less at the foundation of the whole conduct of life? Half London must be levelled to the ground; Brighton, Bath, Leamington, Cheltenham, and all the gay resorts of the fashionable and the sick might be blown up or totally destroyed. As a mere question of Political Economy, what would be the certain effect?—a diminution in the demand for labour to such an extent, as would not only deprive you of four fifths of your Congregation, but would depopulate your country to an extraordinary degree, in as much as four fifths of the arts and manufactures, now supporting hundreds of thousands of the lower classes, would be given up and forsaken—the necessary consequence of which would be the diminution of population, and the consequent scarcity of Souls to save! Now, Sir, do not scream out at the "blasphemy" and infidelity

of this last sentence; such an imputation would fall, if any where, on your own *el dorado* and dreaming projects; if you peruse Adam Smith, James Mill, and Malthus, you cannot but discover this.

Into what would your system manufacture the raw material of man, but a gloomy misanthrope, a maniacal religious Fanatic, at the mercy of every impostor who administered to his voracious credulity. The lower classes, Sir, would be the slaves of despotism and misery: all the rational recreations which now cheer the heart and smooth the brow of industrious labour, which administer sweet *content* to every grade of society, would be abolished; and every national amusement, where all classes meet together, to the advantage of every order, from the Corinthian column to the sturdy base on which the aristocratical superstructure of society is firmly built, would be suppressed: ignorance and pride would stalk in insolence and malice through the uncharitable world: the whole cement and every rivet of the *real* social system would be dissolved and broken asunder. Oh pastimes and games of my childhood, when intralled in chains of daisies and buttercups, and absorbed in the early loves of infancy, I sported on the greensward at noon day, or drank delight

from those cheerful nursery pastimes which passed before the blazing winter fire, are your delightful associations never to be recalled in the infantine amusements of my children! Oh recollections of my youth, and of the Village Schoolmistress who inoculated me with the Alphabet, and from whose nod profound I rushed with troops of schoolmates to the rural games of the Village Green, are you also to cease, and those innocent sports to be declared unholy?

“ Those healthful sports that grac’d the peaceful scene,

Liv’d in each look, and brighten’d all the green;

These far departing, seek a kinder shore,

And rural mirth and manners are no more.”

In your ruthless proscription PUNCH himself (the recreation of the studious Bayle and numerous Literati, Divines included) would be sacrificed. All those popular English Pastimes, the innocent and rural delight of the rustic villager, those diversions of Roman origin on which the British Youth, from the earliest times have built their national character, are to be abandoned: Farewell, ye Vernal Games, ye relics of the Feast of Flora, descended to us from that mighty people who grasped the sceptre of the world and founded ‘the eternal city:’ Farewell, ye Morrice Dan-

cers, ye remembrancers of a brave and high-minded nation the successful cultivators of the arts and sciences and architects of the far famed Alhambra: The Mountebank, the Tumbler, the dancing Bears and Dogs, the tabor and pipe, the wandering and tattered minstrel touching with charity the young heart to the strains of a tin fiddle, May Day with its garlands and sports, the sooty capers of the poor Sweep, the chants of the Christmas Carol, and the cheerful celebration of, and pious thanksgiving for the coming and new year—*these* we are to lay down at the shrine of Mr. James! Then indeed may we exclaim in melancholy with the Poet of the DESERTED VILLAGE—

“ The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age and whisp’ring lovers made!
How often have I blest the coming day,
When toil remitting, lent its turn to play,
And all the village train, from labour free,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree,
While many a pastime circled in the shade,
The young contending as the old survey’d;
And many a gambol frolic’d o’er the ground,
And slights of art and feats of strength went round;
And still as each repeated pleasure tir’d,
Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspir’d;
The dancing pair that simply sought renown,
By holding out, to tire each other down;
The swain mistrustless of his smutty face,
While secret laughter titter’d round the place;

The bashful virgin's side long looks of love,
 The matron's glance that would those looks reprove.
 These were thy charms, sweet village, sports like these,
 With sweet succession, taught e'en toil to please;
 These round thy bowers their cheerful influence shed,
 These were thy charms—but all these charms are fled!"

Such, Sir, is the havoc which you would work in society, had you the *power*: you would abolish all those manly Field Sports, which are so many component parts of our national character; the bold Hunter hallooing at the break, the Sportsman's gun echoing through the mountain cavern of the moor game, the patient Fisherman coveting the trout under the northern rapid—sports which have made the distinctive character of British nerve and mind; which have wafted the British flag and civilization in triumphant victory over all the globe—and without which national character, so formed, your Missionaries, Mr. James, could not have conferred on so many savage millions the golden and precious gifts of the Gospel! Should this pamphlet convert you, Sir, which is more than I confess is reasonably to be expected, you may witness at the BIRMINGHAM THEATRE, the proud and splendid scenic representation of WATERLOO; and if you withstand *that*, I shall say you *are* past literary redemption, and proof against

national pride. But, fortunately, Sir, for the world, your views of Human nature never will be realized till Society is conducted in Balloons; till the human mind works by steam; or till you possess the mines of Mexico and Peru, and can order in your own moulds some millions of cast iron men and women from the foundry of Messrs. Boulton and Watt.

I now arrive at the *grand assault* of your work, in "The Christian Father's Present to his Children," volume the second, chap. xvi. "ON THEATRICAL AMUSEMENTS."

Although I have thought proper in my preceding pages to examine other passages of your "Present," by way of ascertaining and shewing how far you were competent to write on the subject of the Drama and the Stage, I shall, however, strictly confine myself to this part of your work. There is, I confess, great temptation to examine your whole publication and to exhibit the Plagiarisms profusely scattered throughout your five hundred pages: but I shall not concern myself or weary my readers with more than has reference to this particular enquiry "on Theatrical Amusements;" and I doubt not this will be a sufficient sample of the whole. I should, however, previously inform you, that I have not had the leisure or the patience to search for many Creditors to

whom you owe various plagiarised parts of this chapter, besides those which I shall justly restore to their injured proprietors:—but doubtless, you may expect that many of them living, and the representatives of those who are deceased, will now come in and prove their debts! I give verbatim your introductory page—

“I do not hesitate for a moment, to pronounce the THEATRE to be one of the broadest avenues which lead to destruction; fascinating, no doubt it is, but on that account the more delusive and the more dangerous. Let a young Man once acquire a taste for this species of entertainment, and yield himself up to its gratification, and he is in imminent danger of becoming a lost character, rushing upon his ruin. All the evils that can waste his property, corrupt his morals, blast his reputation, impair his health, embitter his life, and destroy his soul, lurk in the purlieus of a Theatre. Vice, in every form, lives, and moves, and has its being there. Myriads have cursed the hour when they first exposed themselves to the contamination of the stage. From that fatal evening they date their destruction. Then they threw off the restraints of education, and learnt to disregard the dictates of conscience. Then their decision hitherto oscillating between a life of virtue and vice, was made up for the latter.”—p. 32.

I shall make no remarks on these preliminary observations, as you immediately add, “*but I will attempt to support by argument and fact these strong assertions.*”

I shall now examine “the arguments and facts” you bring to support “these strong

assertions:" I shall show whence you borrow them; how little you are a judge of what you borrow, and how impertinent and inconclusive your "arguments" and reputed "facts" are to the question at issue.

I should previously inform my Readers (of which some without shame may be uninformed) that there exists a certain book, "*An Essay on the character and influence of the Stage, by John Styles, D. D. third edition, 1820,*" price six shillings. A work *against* the stage is little likely to be read by the admirers of the Drama and Theatrical entertainments; and the price of six shillings would probably place this volume beyond the means of a large part of Mr. James's Congregation. Mr. James might therefore very safely *appropriate* the pages of such a work in the manufacture of his own: this is evident from the *fact* of his having liberally done so, and from the certainty that he would *not* have thus acted, had he anticipated discovery: moreover, it is now some years since the work of *Doctor Styles* was the subject of public notoriety from the many reviews and answers bestowed on the publication, the first edition being published in 1807. The character of Dr. Styles's book, in its original and unmutilated shape, will appear from these pages; further I do not think

it necessary to add of the Reverend author than that his D.D. is *not* the assay mark of an English University, and that from his illiterate use of Classical authors, he has no real pretensions to such honorable initials from *any* "Seat of Learning" in Christendom.

But not to forget you, Mr. James, his humble imitator and borrower, I shall immediately return to the argument and fact. For the sake of distinction, I shall number your paragraphs: but first, I shall beg the favour both of you and of my Readers to return to pages 13 and 14 of this pamphlet, to re-read your first fulminations against the Theatre and the Drama, as published in "Youth Warned." It is unnecessary to reprint those pages, as in the subsequent extracts from "The Christian Father's Present" it will be seen that you have repeated the substance, and generally the very words: your *right* to plagiarise from *yourself*. I shall not question, whatever opinion I may entertain of the bad taste and staleness. I shall, however, briefly notice a few particularly exaggerated and unqualified sentences in those pages. You say the Theatre is the "school where *nothing* good and *every thing* bad is learnt!" Now, Sir, as you cannot be suspected, after this, of having read SHAKESPEARE, much less any other dramatic writer

of later times, celebrated *moral* authors (whose plays have been acted on the Stage,) let me beg of you to borrow Ayscough's Verbal Index to Shakespeare; turn to the denomination of *every* Virtue and every *Vice*, and if you do not there discover the most eloquent eulogies of virtue, and the most powerful denunciations of vice, (the BIBLE only excepted) I will forfeit all claim to having proved your plagiarisms and ignorance:—so much for your following sentence against the Drama as containing “no warnings against irreligion, no mementos of judgment to come; but on the contrary, every thing to inflame his passions, to excite his criminal desires, and to gratify his appetites for vice”—a plainer proof than these sentences could not be given that you do preach “without book,” and that *you* have really never visited the Theatre, where you might have *heard* the eloquent praise of morality and the dispraise of immorality more or less in every dramatic piece on the English Stage.

To give you a few examples, for fear these pages should *not* induce you to read Shakespeare, or witness the representation of his Dramas, thus he speaks of the vice of CALUMNY—

“Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny.”

Hamlet.

"Back wounding calumny the whitest virtue strikes."

Measure for Measure.

And thus of the consequences which overtake those who retail its abominations—

"You shall stifle in your own report and smell of calumny."

Ibid.

You appear unsophistically ignorant of the constitution and history of the Human mind: you do not seem to believe, much as you write about "original sin," that man is frail, and that this world is one of probation and discipline; that "without vice there would be no virtue."—There is much in the moral character of the world hidden in the final and unsearchable ways of its great CREATOR; you may be certain that Providence has constituted the human mind as it was designed, and Shakespeare, who *had* a profound knowledge of human nature, most expressively writes—

"Our Virtues would be proud if our Faults whipp'd them not."

But if I do not restrain myself I shall be seduced from the examination of your "argument" and "fact:" I shall therefore hasten to number one.

The Stage cannot be defended as an *amusement*: for the proper end of an amusement is to recreate without fatiguing or impairing the strength and spirits. It should invigorate, not exhaust the bodily and mental powers; should spread an agreeable serenity over the mind, and be enjoyed at proper seasons. Is midnight the time, or the heated atmosphere of a Theatre the place, or the passionate tempestuous excitement of a deep tragedy the state of mind, that comes up to this view of the design of amusement? Certainly not.

James, p. 32.

"The Stage considered as an amusement, chap. iii."—Amusement is recreation, and is intended to relieve the mind from severe attention or to recruit the animal spirits, by an agreeable suspension of mental or bodily labour. (p. 47) Amusement should invigorate, and not exhaust the powers; it should spread a sweet serenity over the mind, and should be enjoyed at proper seasons. Midnight is no time for recreation to a rational being, &c.

Styles, p. 42.

As to the *assertions* and *opinions* contained in this paragraph, they are questions only of individual judgment and feeling: you and your followers it appears never frequent the Theatre, and therefore cannot be allowed to be witnesses on the subject. But that the Stage *can* be defended as an *amusement* by those who *do* frequent its representations is certain, from the fact of "myriads" of industrious and moral persons nightly attending the London and Provincial Theatres, who, if the Theatre was not an amusement, would doubtless, before 1824, have discovered the fruitlessness of their search: do you think it likely it would have been left to you to reveal such a

discovery, or to explode such a delusion? It is not probable that after the severe and sedentary labours of the Warehouse and the Counting House, persons should *pay* for admittance to what "exhausts their bodily and mental powers." You offer no proof that the average longevity of human life has decreased since the more popular introduction of Stage Plays; the Bills of Mortality contain no new diseases or evidence of this "Stage Plague;" the Coroners' inquests no verdicts on "sudden deaths" in the Theatres. As "all the world," therefore, at times frequent the Theatre, we must allow that it is an amusement and recreation, which, after the fatigues of a long day's labour, recruits the animal spirits, and is an agreeable alterative for the mind. It is also observable, that the Theatre usually *closes* at midnight, and that "the heated atmosphere" has no more injurious effect on the health of his Majesty's subjects than the warm air of your heated evening places of public worship. I think this is sufficient, Sir, on this point: you are of course at liberty in this free country, to endeavour to make people believe your assertions, but my opinion is, that you will never succeed in persuading them "against their senses." I advise you therefore to give up the attempt.

Your second paragraph I now examine.—

2.

But what I wish particularly to insist upon is, *the immoral and antichristian tendency of the Stage.*

It is an indubitable fact that the Stage has flourished most in the most corrupt and depraved state of Society; and that in proportion as sound morality, industry and religion advance their influence, the Theatre is deserted. It is equally true, that among the most passionate admirers, and most constant frequenters of the Stage are to be found the most dissolute and abandoned of mankind.

James, p 32.

The immoral and antichristian tendency of the Stage. chap. iv.

It is a remarkable fact (which the Advocates of the Theatre, on the principle that it is the friend of morals, must account for if they can) that the Stage has flourished most in the most corrupt and depraved state of Society. How comes it to pass that in proportion as sound morality, industry and religion advance their influence, that the Theatre is deserted and neglected, and that it grows in favour in the same ratio as—Virtue and Religion decline. How has it happened too, if the Stage be the School of Virtue, that the most dissolute and abandoned of mankind are its passionate admirers and warmest advocates, &c.

Styles, p. 64-5.

Now, Sir, I deny every assertion (save one) in this paragraph as originally written by Dr. Styles, and abridged by yourself: I certainly do admit that many of the admirers of the Stage are to be found amongst the most dissolute and abandoned of Mankind; according to your account of society, it would be extraordinary indeed, if the Stage, like every other pursuit and profession, had not vicious connections. But what should you think of

an argument against *your* sincerity and moral character on the notorious fact, that among the especial pretenders to evangelical religion there have been a great many especial hypocrites and scoundrels. You well know that this fact has made superior sanctity itself an object of popular suspicion even to a proverb, but should I therefore be liberal in casting such a reflection on you or the majority of your audience?

I assert, it is *not* an indubitable fact that the Stage has flourished most in the most corrupt state of society: the fact is the very reverse; I might at once confute you by a reference to the *present* age in which you so pitiably lament the increasing love of theatrical entertainments, and which, in pages 10 and 11, I have proved to be blessed as the times foretold by the Prophet Micah, iv. 4: but it affords a good opportunity for briefly stating the rise and progress of the Drama and the Stage—the history of which will prove your utter ignorance of the subject on which you have so boldly declaimed in your “Present”

The earliest Dramatic compositions and performances may be said to have originated in the feelings of *piety* natural to man, and indeed were invented by the *Priests*. The *Heathen* celebration of “Harvest Home” was

probably the very first essay: thus in Diacri a portion of the flock was destined to recompense heroic compositions. The Icarians distinguished their Drama by the name of *Tragedy*, or the song of the vintage; the vintagers of Mount Icarus rewarded the poet with a cup of new wine and a wreath of ivy; and through the thickets of Daphnoides, or laurel roses, the victims were led to the sacrifice, the Priests singing Hymns or Lyric Poems to Ceres, Bacchus, and other imaginary Deities; hence originated the *Chorus* of separate bands and the company answering each other alternately. Thespis, who lived about 536 years before the Christian æra, introduced the recitation of verses between the songs; and is said to have travelled about with a moveable stage. Æschylus, fifty years afterwards, introduced the dialogue and dramatis personæ, and first constructed a permanent Theatre, with proper scenery and decoration. The regular Greek Drama soon attained its highest perfection under Sophocles and Euripides. Sophocles, the greatest and most correct of all the Tragic Poets, flourished only twenty-two years after Æschylus, and was only about seventy years posterior to Thespis.* How far the Drama was the cause or effect of progressive civiliza-

* Blair's Lectures, XLV. on Dramatic Poetry.—Pauw's Philosophical Dissertations on the Greeks.

tion, or what influence the Grecian Iambic exercised on the elegant and magnificent simplicity which characterized the taste of that nation, I shall not discuss. But certain it is, that at the most noted period of Grecian virtue and national prosperity, the Drama and the Stage enjoyed their highest influence, and existed in their greatest purity. That nation filled up the chief Legislative and Executive Offices with their Poets and Dramatic writers. I shall not load these pages with pompous citations or references. When you bring forward any *proofs* of your assertions, it will be time enough for me to produce mine: and if you repeat these borrowed calumnies, the Men of Athens shall rise up in judgment against you. One singular fact, however, I cannot omit—viz. that the Grecian Drama declined when the decision on the merits of the authors was removed from the People to an arbitrary tribunal at Athens, formed annually of a few Judges, admitting of no appeal, and whose corrupt decisions, with the most infamous and unparalleled injustice, awarded the public honours to the most vulgar productions, in disdain of the noblest works of Euripides and Menander. Ælian* says that these Oligarchists were either blinded by partiality or *amused*

* *Hist. Divers.* Lib. ii.

by the *Drachmæ* of Attica. The Tyrant Dionysius, by corrupting these Judges, received for bad verses and worse tragedies the public rewards of Athens, to the astonishment of Europe and Asia.* Thus you see, Mr. James, a corrupt National Government corrupted the Drama, not the Drama the People—a trifling difference you must allow in causation. Dr. Blair, though he admits that “the subjects of the ancient Greek Tragedies were too often founded on mere destiny and inevitable misfortunes,” yet says that the instruction which the fable of the plays conveyed, was “reverence owing to the Gods, and submission due to the decrees of destiny.” I could smother you with facts on this subject, but shall close it with the opinion of a most celebrated patriot and political writer Andrew Fletcher, “That most of the ancient legislators, thought they could not well reform the manners of any city, without the help of a lyric, and sometimes of a dramatic poet.”†

3.

Have not all those who have professed the most elevated piety and morality, borne an unvarying and uniform testimony against the Stage? Even the most virtuous pagans condemned this amusement as injurious to morals and the

Could I summon into one interesting group the venerable men, &c of the world, &c. their decision, were it uniform, &c. There is scarcely a distinguished name among the philosophers, &c but is hostile to the Theatre, and pro-

* *Diodorus Siculus*. Lib. xv. † *Political Works*. London, 1737. p. 372.

interests of nations. Plato, Livy, Xenophon, Cicero, Solon, Cato, Seneca, Tacitus, the most venerable men of antiquity, the brightest constellation of virtue and talents which ever appeared upon the hemisphere of Philosophy, have all denounced the Theatre as a most abundant source of moral pollution, and assure us that both Greece and Rome had their ruin accelerated by a fatal passion for these corrupting entertainments.

James, p. 33.

tests against the Stage, &c. p. 135. I might fatigue the reader with quotations from names of the most distinguished eminence; it would be tedious, it would be useless. It is enough to remark, that Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, Cicero, Livy, Valerius Maximus, Solon and Cato, Seneca and Tacitus, the most venerable men of antiquity; a constellation of talents and virtues, the greatest that ever shone, have all condemned the Stage.

Styles, p. 139.

You must allow that my conclusion of the last paragraph is but a sorry introduction of your succeeding one, and that the *opinion* of Andrew Fletcher is of itself a sufficient answer to this your third assertion: but lest you should entertain any doubt, I will give you chapter and verse on every one of these “Ancients” whose names you have taken in vain. The reader will easily see that you have altered the catalogue as given by Dr. Styles, and brought them forward in a very unchronological order: but as I find them, I shall meet them—only premising that it is impossible, for want of leisure, that I can adduce *all* the facts scattered in history and biography attaching to so many characters; but I will endeavour to advance sufficient, to shew that these “venerable men of antiquity” have

not all denounced the Theatre, or attributed the ruin of the Greek and Roman governments to dramatic entertainments. With respect to Greece; Solon, Xenophon, and Plato, could not speculate on the causes of ruin in the womb of futurity: Greece was at its highest tone of public and private celebrity during their lives; indeed the two latter, with the addition of Socrates, may be said to form the triumvirate of Grecian intellect and virtue.—As far as their *opinions* go, (and I do not know what their opinion on the effects of the Stage as it then *was* in such a state of unpolished manners, has to do with the Stage as it now is,) you shall see what they really did think.

On the alledged opposition of SOLON I shall refer to the original sources of information, and you will see how little relevant to the present subject is the citation of his name. You ought to know that he assumed the government of Athens *before* the introduction of the regular Drama; that the morals and habits of the people were excessively loose; and that his jurisprudence, chiefly sumptuary, was directed amongst other things to restrain the excesses practised at sacrifices and funerals—the idleness and expence of these public exhibitions being then a great national evil.

Now, Sir, the only information we have on the sentiments of Solon is obtained from Plutarch's life of that celebrated Lawgiver, and the context of that biography clearly shews two points—that Solon was fond of *concerts*, and that considerable doubt exists as to the particular exhibitions of *Thespis*, which have received his disapproval in the following passage:—

“ About this time Thespis began to change
 “ the form of tragedy, and the novelty of the
 “ thing attracted many spectators; for this
 “ was before any prize was proposed for those
 “ that excelled in this respect. SOLON, who
 “ was always willing to hear and to learn, and
 “ in his old age more *inclined to any thing*
 “ *that might divert and entertain, particularly*
 “ *to music and good fellowship*, went to see
 “ Thespis himself exhibit, as the custom of
 “ the ancient Poets was. When the play was
 “ done, he called to Thespis, and asked him,
 “ ‘ If he was not ashamed to tell so many
 “ lies before so great an assembly?’ Thespis
 “ answered, ‘ It was no great matter, if he
 “ spoke or acted so in jest.’ To which Solon
 “ replied, striking the ground violently with
 “ his staff, ‘ If we encourage such jesting as
 “ *this*, we shall quickly find it in our contracts
 “ and agreements.’ ”* This, Sir, is the only

* Plutarch. Solon.

authority for your introduction of Solon; and I contend, that in regard to his disapproval of Dramatic entertainments, first, the grimaces and jests of Thespis do not deserve the name of Drama, and that the precise *nature* of those representations is altogether unknown.— Secondly, that the citation proves Solon had no objection to frequent Public exhibitions; that he was particularly fond of Music; and that probably he respected “the custom of the ancient Poets.” Moreover, Solon himself once performed the following notable public exhibition. When the Athenians were about to relinquish their claim to Salamis, he feigned himself insane, and a report spread itself into the city that he was out of his senses: Privately, however, he composed and learned by rote, an elegy, in order to repeat in public: thus prepared, he sallied out unexpectedly into the market place with a cap upon his head. A great number of people flocking about him there, he got upon the herald’s stone, and sang the elegy *Salamis*, which consisted of a hundred beautiful lines, beginning thus—

“Hear and attend; from Salamis I came
To show your error, &c.”

Do you not call this a dramatic act?

As to the often trumpeted opposition of DEMOSTHENES, this is the fact—that the Athenians, relieved from their fears by the death of Epaminoudas, began to squander away upon shows and plays, the money that had been assigned for the pay of the army and navy: Demosthenes, boldly in his oration, denounced this mis-appropriation of the public funds: but is this any proof that he was an enemy to public entertainments at proper times and seasons?

LYCURGUS, also, the Spartan Legislator, is equally misrepresented. No one of the present day would ever introduce the Spartan character, great as it might have been, but selfish and cold, as a pattern for modern nations. Lycurgus, *if* the enemy of the Drama, would not *now* be authority against Covent Garden and Drury Lane: but though he restrained the expences of public entertainments, he was *not* an enemy to them in the abstract. He brought Thales from Crete, a Lyric Poet, (as well as a distinguished lawgiver) who according to Plutarch, by the melody of his verse, prepared the way for Lycurgus, and insensibly inclined the Spartan people for the instructions of that great man. Lycurgus also has the honour of first collecting and disseminating the verses of HOMER. This Lawgiver enacted,

that the young women and men should often dance and sing in public on certain festivals. Lacedemonian poems are quoted by Plutarch in his life of Lycurgus, and Pindar who sings—

There in grave council sits the sage;
 There burns the youth's resistless rage
 To hurl the quiv'ring lance;
 The Muse with glory crowns their arms,
 And melody exerts her charms,
 And Pleasure leads the dance.

PLATO, certainly excluded the Stage and Epic Poetry from his *Ideal Commonwealth*; but how far he and XENOPHON (who by the bye only denounces *Persian* idleness) are fairly appropriated by you may be gathered from the fact that their great master, Socrates, frequented the Theatre with his pupils, and assisted Euripides in the composition of his Tragedies; and your friend Dr. Styles is equally unlucky in the introduction of ARISTOTLE, as both of you may satisfy yourselves by referring to his *Ethics* and *Poetry*, book v. on Education, (there is a translation by Dr. Gillies) where Aristotle writes—"The gymnastic is subservient to strength and courage, invigorating the body and fortifying the mind. Music, indeed, is now degraded into a playful pastime, but was introduced into education, by our wiser ancestors, because youth ought

to be taught, not only how to pursue business, but how to enjoy leisure; an enjoyment which is the end of business itself, and the limit in which all our active pursuits finally terminate. This enjoyment is of a nature too noble and too elevated to consist in plays and pastimes, which it would be in vain to consider as the main end and final purpose of life, and which are chiefly useful in the intervals of toilsome exertion, as salutary recreations of the mind, and seasonable unbendings from contentious activity.”* There is one other fact also, very pertinently mentioned by Mr. Bunn—that Aristotle, whom Plato calls the Philosopher of Truth, lays down a model for the formation of the Greek Drama and Stage. I think you have now, Sir, had sufficient of the Greeks, but before I close these literary details relative to that glorious People, the handmaids of the Arts and Sciences, may I be allowed some brief allusion to their present struggle for Liberty and Religion against a barbarian and bigoted invader. Let the INHABITANTS of BIRMINGHAM aid the public exertions throughout the Kingdom in support of this holy cause, and bring home to their own feelings the violation of their families, their property, and their temples of worship! Let them

* Aristotle, by Gillies. London, 1797, vol. ii. p. 254.

picture to themselves such miseries, and base indeed must be the apathy that can remain dead to the calls of the Greeks on the sympathy and liberality of the whole world: it is but the repayment of a debt of honour towards that land where the gardens of the Academy flourished—the soil where the tree of freedom first blossomed and shed its luxuriant seed throughout the earth—to the representatives of those great spirits of antiquity now no more, fighting for their natural and ancient rights—

Περὶ παντός τὴν ελευθερίαν—

LIBERTY ABOVE ALL THINGS.

I shall now introduce you to the *Romans*; to begin with CATO, it is impossible to know whom you mean by this agnomen of the Porcian family, and perhaps you do not know yourself. There were two illustrious individuals of this name celebrated by the severity of their private character and their efforts to reform the public morals of Rome. If you were acquainted with their characters however, you would hardly consider them as models for the private or the public character of the present day. If you mean M. Porcius Cato, the *Censor*, it is true that early in life he strongly opposed the introduction of the fine

arts from Greece into Italy, fearing their effect on the valor and simplicity of the Roman people: but it is *also* true that in his advanced age he altered his opinion (as you may possibly do) applied himself to the study of Greek, educated his son in the literature of Greece, and became a great admirer of their political and dramatic writers. But I think, most probably, you mean the Utican, Cato the *younger*, the great grandson of the Censor: and if so, you are still further mistaken. It is remarkable that *this* Cato first distinguished himself in a juvenile play, or tournament of boys, of the noblest families of Rome, given by Sylla, and of whom Cato by the youthful suffrages was elected Captain.* As to his opinions and conduct in after life, Plutarch in his biography, writes that when Favonius was *Ædile* "he had the assistance of Cato, particularly in the *theatrical* entertainments that were given to the people! In these Cato gave another specimen of his economy; for he did not allow the players and musicians crowns of gold, but of wild olive, such as are used in the Olympic games." Curio, the colleague of Favonius, Plutarch also says, gave noble enter-

* Troy; a game celebrated in the public circus by companies of boys of the noblest families of Rome. See an interesting description in Virgil. *Æneid.* v. 545.

tainments in another theatre, "but that the People were much more entertained with seeing Cato master of the Ceremonies:" and Plutarch makes this remark, "it is probable however, that Cato took this upon him only to shew the folly of troublesome and expensive preparations in matters of mere amusement, and that the benevolence and good humour suitable to such occasions would have a better effect."

You have made extremely free with Cicerō. The study of Grecian literature was the foundation of his Roman Eloquence.* Roscius and Æsopus, two Stage Actors, were his tutors in Oratory. His Oration for Archias, and on behalf of Roscius, two of the most noble specimens of his eloquence, are proofs of the estimation in which he held the legitimate Drama and the Stage, and the respect he entertained for Actors of talent and private

"* Yes, I own myself to be enchanted with these studies. For had not my youthful mind, from many precepts, from many writings, drank in this truth, that glory and virtue ought to be the darling, nay the only wish in life, never had I exposed my person in so many encounters, and to these daily conflicts with the worst of men, for your deliverance. How many pictures of the bravest men have the Greek and Latin authors left us! A Poet is formed by the hand of nature; he is aroused by mental vigour, and inspired by what we may call the spirit of divinity itself. Therefore our Ennius has a right to give to Poets the epithet of *holy*, because they are as it were, lent to mankind by the indulgent bounty of the Gods."—*Oration for A. Licinius Archias.*

worth. If you refer to his Letters, (Melmoth's Translation, b. 2) you will read in his letter to Marcus Marius, many interesting facts directly contradicting your assertions. He there speaks of his "old friend Æsopus" the actor; and though he certainly condemns some public entertainments then going on, it was because they were *gladiatorial* and *equestrian* exhibitions: the letter proves his frequent attendance on theatrical amusements, such as they were. In his tenth Letter (b. iii.) addressed to Caius Curio, he does indeed advise that Patrician against "entertaining the people with *public games*;" but if you turn to the letter you will see the *reason* of this advice—because "they are instances of wealth only, not of merit," and "that the Public is quite satiated with their frequent returns." Cicero well knew the profusion of Curio's disposition: the latter neglected his advice, contracted debts he was unable to pay, and eventually sold himself to Cæsar. That the Drama was a subject particularly interesting to Cicero, is evident in numerous passages of his literary correspondence: the following extract from his letter to Papyrius Pætus is ample evidence.

"But to turn from the serious to the jocose part of your letter, the strain of pleasantry you

break into immediately after having quoted the tragedy of Oenomanus, puts me in mind of the modern method of introducing at the end of these graver dramatic pieces, the buffoon humour of our low Mimes, instead of the more delicate burlesque of the old Attellan Farces.”*

I now proceed to LIVY: your reference to him will no more suit your purpose than the last Classic. Livy was last introduced as an opponent of the stage and Drama in a Pamphlet, entitled “The Stage the High Road to Hell, 1768”—from whence Dr. Styles brought him into his Essay. That anonymous author interpolates Livy’s History with the following sentence—“That Plays were brought in upon the score of Religion; but that the remedy proved worse than the disease, for the plays did more hurt to the mind than the pestilence to the body:” he accompanies this impudent forgery with no reference to Livy and no Latin. Livy never said any such thing: his words are, in reference to the introduction of Players to propitiate the Gods during a pestilence, that “they neither freed their minds from superstition nor their bodies from the plague.”†

* *Melmoth’s translation.* B. viii. lett. 20.

† *Nec tamen ludorum primum initium procurandis religionibus datum, aut religione animos, aut corpora morbis levavit. Livy, L. vii. c. 3.*

If you will take Baker's Translation of Livy's History of Rome, and consult the Index in the sixth volume, article *Games*, as founded by Romulus and Tarquinius Priscus, and also on the Capitoline, Apollonarian, Circensian, Megalesian, Plebeian, Funeral Ceremonies, and Public Amusements, and refer to the several books in Livy where their origin and nature are treated of, you will be ashamed of ever again mentioning the name of Livy with whose works you cannot have the slightest acquaintance. In Livy you may see how these entertainments were originally connected with heathen notions of piety and religion; and you will see how progressively with art and science the display and eloquence of Public Amusements and festivals also advanced.

You could not possibly have summoned a more mal-apropos name than SENECA. The only Roman Tragedies extant bear his name! And the passage in his writings, which has been construed by your party against the Theatre, has nothing to do with that question:*

* Inimica est multorum conversatio; nemo non aliquod nobis vitium aut commendat, aut imprimit, aut nescientibus allinit. Utique quo major est populus cui commiscemur, hoc periculi plus est. Nihil vero est tam damnosum bonis moribus, quam in aliquo spectaculo desiderare. Tunc enim per voluptatem vitia facilius surrepunt. Quid me existimas dicere? Avarior redeo, ambitiosior, luxuriosior, imo vero crudelior et inhumanior quia inter homines fui. Casu in meridianum spectaculum

Seneca merely recommends to Lucilius retirement, by shewing the interruption a Philosopher or Man of Letters is subject to in a Public life; he censures on this principle, all Public assemblies, and concludes with reflections on the barbarities of Gladiatorial Exhibitions—but as to Stage Plays, he has not a syllable about them, and do you not confess, that if he *had* been inimical to them, the Author of the *Morals* in such a compendium for the conduct of life, would not have omitted the expression of his opinion?

TACITUS must now be examined.

The first mention made by him of the Public *Games* and amusements, is (Annals, b. xiv.) of the Quinquennial Games, instituted by Nero, “after the fashion of the prize matches amongst the Greeks”—if you refer to the book you will see that he quotes what “some alleged”—viz. that those games were of excessive continuance; that “nights as well as days were bestowed upon the infamous *revel*,” and that the most corrupt adulation was lavished on the usurpers in power. What has this to

incidi, lusus expectans et sales, et aliquid luxamenti, quo hominum oculi ab humano cruore acquiescant—Contra est, quicquid ante pugnatum est misericordia fuit; nunc, omissis nugis, mera homicidia sunt. *Sen. Op. fol. Par. ed. p. 168.*

do with the drama of the present day? And with your usual ill fortune, I have to inform you, (see *Annals*, b. xi.) that Tacitus, in the *Secular Games* presented by the Emperor Domitian, writes, "I assisted in person, and the more assiduously as I was invested with the *Quindecimviral Priesthood*, and at that time *Prætor*." If you can find one sentence in Tacitus, which can justify your quotation of his name, it is more than I can discover.

Now before I close the Roman list, and not to leave any thing undone, I must beg one sentence as to the opinions of VALERIUS MAXIMUS, whom, it will be seen, Styles catalogues, and you omit, (I suppose because *you* did not know who he was:) The only passage Styles can allude to is, *Val. Max. l. ii. c. 4. s. 5*—this passage no more relates to stage plays than it does to Dr. Styles's Chapel at Kennington: any first form boy at the Charter House would tell you so; it relates to the *Secular Games*, according to some historians instituted under Numa, 336 years before plays were known to the Romans!

Augustus Cæsar considered some of the Roman plays so unexceptionable that he allowed the Vestal Virgins to go to them, and assigned them a place at the Theatre!

But I think, to set more Romans upon you would argue a revengeful spirit, you will doubtless be content with *Roscius* for an Actor; *Cicero*, his Pupil, for a Spectator; *Brutus*, *Pompey*, and *Augustus*, for Patrons of the Stage.

I hasten therefore with fear and trembling to PRYNNE, the Goliath of your party against plays.

4.

William Prynne, a satirical and pungent writer, who suffered many cruelties for his admirable productions in the time of Charles I. has made a catalogue of authorities against the Stage, which contain every name of eminence in the Heathen and Christian Worlds: it comprehends the united testimony of the Jewish and Christian Churches; the deliberate acts of fifty-four ancient and modern general national and provincial Councils and Synods both of the Western and Eastern Churches; the condemnatory sentence of seventy-one ancient Fathers, and one hundred and fifty modern Popish and Protestant Authors; the hostile endeavours of Philosophers, and even Poets, with the legislative enactments of a great number of Pagan and Christian States, Nations, Magistrates, Emperors and Princes.

James, p. 32.

Prynne, whose name is dear to Protestantism, &c. in the reign of King Charles the 1st, &c. has made a catalogue of authorities against the stage, which contains every name of eminence in the Heathen and Christian worlds; it comprehends the united testimony of the Jewish and Christian churches; the deliberate acts of 54 ancient and modern general, provincial, and national councils and synods, both of the Eastern and Western churches; the condemnatory sentence of 71 ancient Fathers, and 150 modern Popish and Protestant authors; the hostile endeavours of Philosophers, and of even Poets; with the legislative enactments of a great number of Pagan and Christian States, Nations, Emperors, Princes and Magistrates.

Styles, p. 140.

This literary monster, the *Histrio-mastix*, the “substantial” work of the most “voluminous zealot” that ever wrote in controversy now lies before me, with its 1006 quarto pages excluding a proportionate Preface and Index, with a thick garnish of marginal notes and reference! There was a time, Sir, when the energy of youth carried me through a great portion of this vast labour; but if ever I am to refresh my memory with its contents, it shall be by getting a man to read it for me at your expence.

“*Histrio-mastix, The Players Scourge or Actor’s Tragædie, divided into two parts, wherein it is largely evidenced, by divers arguments, by the concurring authorities and resolutions of sundry texts of Scripture, of the whole primitive Church, both under the Law and Gospel; of 55 Synodes and Councils; of 71 Fathers and Christian Writers, before the yeare of our Lord 1200; of above 150 foreign and domestique Protestant and Popish Authors, since; of 40 Heathen Philosophers, Historians, Poets and many Heathen, many Christian nations, Republicques Emperors Princes Magistrates, of sundry Apostolical Canonical Imperial Constitutions and our own English Statutes, Magistrates Universities Writers Preachers—That Popular Stage Playes (the very Pompes of the Divell which we renounce in Baptism if we believe the Fathers) are sinful, heathenish, lewde ungodly Spectacles and most pernicious Corruptions, condemned in all ages, as intolerable mischiefs to Churches, to Republics, to the manners mindes and souls of men. And that the Profession of Play-poets, of Stage Players; together with the penning, acting, and frequenting of Stage Plays, are unlawful, infamous, and misheseeming Christians. All pretences to the contrary are here likewise fully answered; and the unlawfulness of acting or beholding Academical Enterludes briefly discussed; besides sundry other particulars concerning Dancing, Dicing, Health-drinking, &c. of which the Table will inform you. By William Pryane an Utter Barrester of Lincolne’s Inne. London. Printed by E. A. and W. J. for Michael Sparke, and are to be sold at the Blue Bible, in Greene Arbour, in little Old Bayley. 1633.*”

Thus you see, Sir, Dr. Styles has only abbreviated this immense Play-bill of Prynne's literary Amusements, a book he probably never saw. Now, Sir, you perhaps know that there are such things as *Answers* to books; and should it ever happen to you to meet with a little 12mo. entitled

"Theatrum Redivivum, or the Theatre vindicated by Sir Richard Baker in answer to Mr. Pryn's Histrio-mastix, wherein his groundless assertions against Stage Plays are discovered, his mistaken allegations of the Fathers manifested, as also what he calls his Reasons, to be nothing but his Passions, (Comici finis est humanos mores nosse, atque describere. HIEROM ad FURIAM.) London 1662,"

you will see in 140 small pages, one of the most masterly and witty answers ever bestowed on a disingenuous Author. He there exhibits Mr. Prynne going about with a Press-gang, and laying violent hands on every body living or dead, he could torture to his purpose. As this ingenious and erudite Tract will be shortly reprinted, I shall not enlarge on Prynne's title page, further than to observe, that more or less every opinion he quotes has reference to *Heathen* exhibitions, and disgraceful immorality: That his citations are most partial and disingenuous; and that the man who could forge Archbishop Laud's Diary, and *select* as he did the Public Records in favour of Monarchical usurpations, may well be capable of dishonest quotation against the

Stage. Prynne was a learned, laborious, and persecuted man, entitled therefore to our respect as such; but his character was mixed up with much bigotry, fanaticism, and inconsistency. In Malone's History of the Stage may be also traced the real reason of Puritanical zeal against the Drama, viz. the Theatrical lampoons on the peculiarities and opinions of the early English Protestants and Puritan Dissenters—*hinc illæ lachrymæ*.

I now go to your fifth argument—that the American Congress, soon after the declaration of Independence, passed a resolution for the suppression of theatrical entertainments. Now, Sir, had you been conversant with the history of this Transatlantic State, you would have known that this was not merely owing to the influence of some rigid Quakers and Puritans whose prejudices were strongly against those amusements, but was acquiesced in *temporarily* from *political* reasons; because the Drama of the Mother Country kept alive the old *loyal* associations. And now that the danger is past, what is the result? the return of the Drama and the Stage; and America, universally cited as an instance of superior government and prosperity, engages at large Salaries, our principal English Performers. If therefore this resolution of the first Federal Union

“ must be regarded in the light of very strong presumptive evidence of the immoral tendency of the Stage,” does not the *present* state of the American Stage carry an equally presumptive proof of the *moral* and *amusing* tendency of the Theatre?

6.

But let us examine *the average character of those productions which are represented on the Stage*. If we go to Tragedy, we shall find that pride, ambition, revenge, suicide, the passionate love of fame and glory, all of which Christianity is intended to extirpate from the human bosom, are inculcated by the most popular Plays in this department of the drama. It is true, gross cruelty, murder, and that lawless pride, ambition and revenge, which trample on all the rights and interests of mankind, are reprobated; but I would ask, who needs to see Vice acted in order to hate it? or will its being acted for our amusement, be likely to increase our hatred of it upon right principles?

Ancient Tragedy is certainly the most unexceptionable part of Dramatic history; but in this a Christian finds enough to make him mourn over the moral degradation of mankind. Pride, ambition, and revenge, are prominent features in ancient Tragedy; but in this the heathens were consistent with themselves, and inculcated the same lessons at the Theatre, which they heard in their Temples.

Styles, p. 40.

James, p. 34.

As this sixth paragraph is only an *opinion* of yours, I shall cheque it with the opinions of others. Aristotle is the eulogist of this department of the Drama. (Poet, c. 6.) The emperor Antoninus, in principle a disciple of Zeno severe as Cato the Censor, thus writes:

“ *Tragedy* received its birth from a desire to remind men of the several accidents attendant on mortal man; and to forewarn them, that similar events may happen to themselves; also to teach mankind, that those miseries which form their amusement when feigned on the Stage, ought not when real, to be deemed insupportable in the general theatre of the world.”—*Mr. John Milton* thus prefaces, in 1671, *Sampson Agonistes*, a Dramatic Poem—“ *Tragedy*, as it was antiently composed, hath been ever held the gravest moralest, and most profitable of all other Poems: therefore said by *Aristotle* to be of power by raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and such like passions. Hence *Philosophers* and other gravest writers, as *Cicero*, *Plutarch* and others, frequently cite out of *Tragic Poets*, both to adorn and illustrate their discourse. The *Apostle Paul* himself thought it not unworthy to insert a verse of *Euripides* into the text of Holy Scripture, *I. Cor. xv. 33*, and *Paræus* commenting on the *Revelations*, divides the whole Book as a *Tragedy* into acts, distinguished each by a chorus of heavenly harpiings and song between. Heretofore men in highest dignity have laboured not a little to be thought able to compose a *Tragedy*, *Dionysius*, *Augustus Cæsar*, *Seneca*, *Gregory*

Nazianzen a Father of the Church, &c.”—Addison’s opinion on Tragedy may be collected in his various works, but was particularly displayed by his writing *Cato*. Dr. Blair, (whom you recommend to the study of young persons) says—“ Modern Tragedy has aimed at a higher object by becoming more the theatre of passion; pointing out to men the consequences of their own misconduct; shewing the direful effects which ambition, jealousy, love, resentment, and other such strong emotions, when misguided, or left unrestrained, produce upon human life—these and such as these are the examples which Tragedy now displays to public view; and by means of which it inculcates on men the proper government of their passions. Taking Tragedies complexly, I am fully persuaded, that the impressions left by them upon the mind, are on the whole, favourable to virtue and good dispositions. And therefore the zeal which some pious men have shewn against the Theatre must rest only on the *abuse* of Comedy, which indeed has frequently been so great as to justify very severe censures against it.”* I think you will allow *these* opinions to counterbalance *yours*: I therefore pass to your assertions on *Comedy*, which I shall try in the same mode.

* Blair. Lecture XLV. Dramatic Poetry.

7.

As to Comedy, this is a thousand times more polluting than Tragedy. Love and intrigue; prodigality dressed in the garb of generosity; profaneness dignified with the name of fashionable spirit; and even seduction and adultery; these are the usual materials which the Comic muse combines and adorns to please and instruct her Votaries. This department of the drama is unmixed pollution.

James, p. 35.

Comedy is in its nature so contemptible, and the "Stuff" of which it is made so disgusting to a mind of common dignity, that its plots, its follies, and what some are pleased to call its good humoured Vices, shall not pollute my page. Love, intrigue, prodigality dressed in the garb of generosity, profaneness dignified with the name of fashionable spirit, seduction and adultery, mere peccadillos in these days of refinement, are all materials which the Comic muse combines and adorns to please and instruct her Votaries.

Stiles, second Edition, p. 85.

I shall here content myself with again quoting Dr. Blair's opinion against yours—"Comedy proposes for its object, neither the great sufferings, nor the great crimes of men; but their follies and slighter vices, those parts of their character, which raise in beholders a sense of impropriety, which expose them to be censured, and laughed at by others, or which render them troublesome in civil society. The general idea of Comedy, as a satyrical exhibition of the improprieties and follies of mankind, is an idea very moral and useful."* The only part of your paragraph deserving notice is what may be fairly granted you without

affecting the question—viz. that certain *abuses* have at various periods of history disgraced this department of the Drama. But what then? is it an argument against the thing itself any more than the impositions of Priestcraft are arguments against the value of true Religion? I grant you that the most obscene and licentious compositions *have* disgraced literature and the stage, and that the periodical attacks on the stage by Northbrooke, D. Rainolds, Prynne, and Collier, may have had very salutary effects in curbing and banishing immoral writings—but is the *abuse* of a thing any objection against its *use*. “Licentious writers of the Comic class have too often had it in their power to cast a ridicule upon characters and objects which did not deserve it: but this is a fault not owing to the nature of Comedy, but to the genius and turn of the Writers of it.”* I am certainly aware that the religious peculiarities of some Christian sects have been satirized on the stage: I cannot say that I approve of such an exhibition. It is a species of religious usurpation: who is to be the judge of what is false or what is fanatical, amid the clashing opinions on forms and doctrines? As power revolves, true religion itself may become the banter of knaves

* Blair. Lect. XLVII.

and fanatics. Still the impositions of Brothers and Joannah Southcote may be fair subjects of the Comic Muse. I suppose you know that Hales, Chillingworth, Stillingfleet, Sherlock, and Pascal, wielded the weapons of Wit and Ridicule in polemical contests. And when Wit is the vehicle of Sense, not the substitute, it is doubtless a powerful solvent of imposture and superstition—so well discriminated by the great author of “The Night Thoughts,” himself a Dramatic writer—

Sense is our helmet, Wit is but the plume;
 The plume exposes, 'tis our helmet saves.
 Sense is the diamond, weighty, solid, sound;
 When cut by wit, it casts a brighter beam;
 Yet, wit apart, it is a diamond still.
 Wit, widow'd of good sense, is worse than nought;
 It hoists more sail to run against a rock.

Young. N. viii. l. 1232.

Do you not know that Menander, Plautus, and Terence, have greatly contributed to the progress of letters? Has the French Comedy no charms for you? * The first age of English Comedy was *not* infected with that spirit of

* “Moliere is always the Satirist only of vice or folly. He has selected a great variety of ridiculous characters peculiar to the times in which he lived, and he has generally placed the ridicule justly. Vice is exposed in the style of elegant and polite Satire. In his Prose Comedies, though there is abundance of ridicule, yet there is never any thing found to offend a modest ear, or throw contempt on sobriety and virtue.” *Blair. Lect. XLVII.*

indecenty and licentiousness which unhappily characterized the age of Charles II. and the after period. Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Massinger, Beaumont and Fletcher, cannot be accused of intentional immoral tendency: they have certainly depicted characters *now* unnatural, with frequent coarse and gross allusions; but scenes were admitted in compliance with the custom of the times; and when we consider the state of manners and of vulgar colloquial language, what literary Goth can not tolerate their defects for the sake of their beauties?—these deformities are but the rude casket which contains the brilliant diamond. I shall pass over those English Writers, who, condescending to the vitiated taste of the age in which they lived, disgraced their language and their country by licentious writings, and with Blair, “I am happy, however, to have it in my power to observe that, of late years, a sensible reformation has begun to take place in English Comedy;”—and during the half century which has elapsed since this observation was published, I may honestly say, that modern taste has nearly banished all remaining impurities from the Stage.

You then make some general *assertions* that the Audience of a Theatre are constantly interested on behalf of vice, and tolerate

“atrocities” for the sake of “open hearted, good humoured virtues.” You say young women are prepared for intrigues, and young men for rakes. You bring forward no *facts* or *arguments* in support of these “strong assertions,”—I shall therefore leave them to their fate and public disbelief. Then follows—

8.

“Besides, how saturated are both tragedies and comedies with irreverend appeals to Heaven, profane swearing, and all the arts of equivocation, and falsehood, and deception! What lascivious allusions are made; what impure passages are repeated! What a fatal influence must this have on the delicacy of female modesty. Think too of a young man coming at the hour of midnight from such a scene, with his passions inflamed, &c. passing through ranks of wretched creatures waiting to ensnare him and rob him of his virtue; does it not require extraordinary strength of principle to resist the attack?”—p. 36.

This paragraph is the only one I cannot *immediately* discover in the several books before me, from whence your *transplantations* have been made into your “Present,” but they are all scattered in Styles or Witherspoon. In page 39, you “add to this, the company which is generally attracted to the Theatre: the most polluting and polluted characters of the town are sure to be there.” You illustrate this assertion and argument by an anecdote of

a whole page, (too long a story for insertion) copied verbatim from Dr. Styles.

9.

Sir John Hawkins, in his Life of Johnson, has a remark which strikingly illustrates and confirms what I have now advanced, &c. Sir John Hawkins, in his Life of Johnson, has a remark which strikingly illustrates and confirms what I have now advanced, &c.

James, p. 39.

Styles, p. 113.

The pith of this anecdote is "that no sooner is a Theatre opened in any part of the kingdom, than it becomes surrounded by houses of ill fame."

I shall answer these two paragraphs in one, as they are in fact mere reverberation of declamation. In regard to blasphemy and profane swearing, Mr. James, the *Law* has provided against that abuse; and you have only to give information at the Public Office, and the Persons jestingly or profanely using the name of God will be fined £10. (*Stat. I. James I. cap. 21.*) Penal Laws in abundance, Sir, defend Religion from the dangers of the Theatre. Players speaking any thing in derogation of Christianity, &c. are liable to forfeitures and imprisonment, (*I. Eliz.*) The acting of Plays also on Sundays (which long continued out of Prayer hours) was prohibited and subjected to penalties, by *I. Car. I. cap. 1.* No person can act any new play, or addition

to an old one, unless licensed by the Lord Chamberlain fourteen days before it be acted, and who may also prohibit the representation of any established Stage play; and the violation of these prohibitions (every Theatre also being licensed) incurs a penalty of £50. and the forfeiture of the licenses. (*Stat. 10. Geo. 11. cap. 28.*) Now if this our Penal Code, aided by Public Opinion and Clerical Magistrates, will not repress Stage irreverence, I do not think your warnings or “Presents” are likely to effect much.—In respect to the company who frequent a Theatre, I contend that the great majority attend purely as an *intellectual* amusement. I am persuaded that the fashionable *boxes* of a Theatre are best filled when unexceptionable Dramatic pieces are performed; and the late revival of our most pure and celebrated Dramas is a proof. As to the polluted Society you mention, it is but too true, that the English Box Lobbies are disgraced by the open display of female prostitution; but it is a well known fact, that the other parts of the Theatre, the Pit and Galleries, appropriated to less fashionable classes of society, are *not* so disgraced; and the following average account of the numbers in the London Theatres will shew how comparatively few must be the number of these unfortunate

women, (who only frequent the upper tier) and consequently how few men can be attracted by their presence. The two principal London Theatres will contain—Boxes 1400; Pit 950; Galleries 1200: The Birmingham Theatre—Boxes 720; Pit 480; Gallery 1050. Now can you on this statement, assert that these Audiences comprehend a more numerous class of the vicious, than any other public society of equal numbers? You well know that Vice, like every other marketable commodity, will be offered for sale in great public thoroughfares. Can you see the vast majority of an audience rivetted on the scenic representation, without confessing that many a youthful passion is preserved from temptation *out of doors* by this intellectual occupation of his time within? London, and all large towns, are by reason of their congregated numbers a focus of vice: you know licentiousness would find other haunts and not be one wit limited by the suppression of the Stage: it would be hard indeed, that virtue should imprison itself because vice frequented the same resort; on that principle we might not walk in broad day light the great streets of the metropolis because of the “polluted” neighbours on all sides. The vice here alluded to, Sir, is the only disgrace of the Theatre; it doubtless

might be reduced within more decent and contracted bounds: but to exterminate it is hopeless. God forbid, Sir, I should seek to palliate its immorality—but speak not too harshly of those unfortunate beings whom the viciousness of your own sex have brought within the cruel fangs of dire necessity.

“ Poor Profligate ! I will not chide thy sins:
 What, tho' the coldly virtuous turn away,
 And the proud Priest shall stalk indignant by,
 And deem himself polluted should he hold
 A moment's converse with thy guilty soul,
 Yet thou shalt have my tear.—To such as thou,
 Sinful, abas'd, and unbefriended, came
 The world's great Saviour. —

Yes, hapless outcast ! thou shalt have my tear;
 Thou once was fairer than the morning light,
 Thy breast unsullied as the meadow's flower
 Wash'd by the dews of May.—

Not on thee
 Shall fall the curse of Heaven, but on the wretch,
 Fell as the lion on Numidia's wilds,

* * * * *

Soon left thee as the poor and naked stalk
 Now worthless, to abide the wintry blast—
 The chilling tempests of the world's proud scorn.”

Unpublished Poem.

The story of Sir John Hawkins is lost in the fact that the neighbourhood of the Birmingham Theatre is particularly respectable and is *not* the dwelling place of the vicious.

10.

I admit that modern plays are in some measure purified from that excessive grossness which polluted the performances of our more ancient dramatists. But who knows not that vice is more mischievous in some circles of society, in proportion as it is more refined. The arch equivoque and double entendre of modern plays "are well understood, and applied by a licentious audience; and the buzz of approbation, which is heard through the whole assembly, furnishes abundant proof that the effect is not lost."

James, p. 36.

I would by no means be thought to institute a comparison between the plays of Congreve and modern writers. But as our writers for the Stage now manage it, "vice loses half its evil by losing all its grossness," and consequently is more dangerous than the barefaced obscenities, &c. a double entendre and an arch equivoque are well understood and applied by a licentious audience; and the buzz of approbation which is heard through the whole assembly, furnishes abundant proof that the effect is not lost.

Styles, p. 30.

The last six lines of this paragraph is the only passage you have marked as quoted, but you have given no reference to Dr. Styles. My remarks will be brief: if subtracting grossness from vice makes it more dangerous, then I know not the distinction between sensuality and intellectual feeling. And formerly a great frequenter of plays, I can flatly contradict this imputed propensity in the Public to applaud a licentious double entendre: I have always heard noble sentiments echoed in public applause; and on several occasions the lurking remains of the old broad Comedy received with marked disapprobation. And whatever may be the opinions of those who do *not* go to

Plays these facts will be corroborated by all who *do*.

Your thirty-eighth page abridges Dr. Styles's chapter—"Christian Morality and the Morality of the Stage contrasted." You *assert* that the most passionate admirers of the latter will not "try it in such a court:" that they "are diametrically opposed to each other."—"Let any man read our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, or St. Paul's 8th or 12th chapter to the Romans, and say if the Play and the Play-house can be in unison with Christianity."

11.

"Whether ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," cannot look with a tolerating eye on the Stage. The morality of the Stage and the Gospel are as diametrically opposed to each other as the east and the west. They stand thus opposed to each other;—pride to humility; ambition to moderation; revenge to forgiveness, &c.

Thus every thing in the Gospel is directly opposed to pride and ambition, to anger and revenge, &c. the New Testament, and its leading fundamental principle is—"whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

Styles, p. 94.

James, p. 38.

The best things are frequently the most abused, and it is conceded that immorality has sometimes disgraced the stage, but as Lycurgus said—"shall we destroy all the vines, because some men get drunk with the juice of

the grape?" The Stage does not pretend to teach the Gospel—it is an amusement, not a religious ceremony; and doubtless the same general Christian laws forbid the abuses of Plays which forbid any other vicious occupations. But no single text can be fairly quoted out of the Bible by you against the Drama or the Stage. The Old Testament in numerous instances may be cited in their defence: refer to the Psalms, and to Jeremiah, where God himself promises to the Jews on their return from Chaldea, timbrels and dances to make merry! The Chorus and Semi-chorus have their earliest origin in the Psalms of David. The Song of Solomon and the Book of Job are considered by the ablest expositors and critics as Dramatic Poetry (see Gray's Key, Orton and Lowth's Lectures on Hebrew Poetry, vol. ii. xxxiii.) In the New Testament there is no express or implied reflections on the Theatre, notwithstanding our Saviour and the Apostles preached the Gospel in Judæa and countries where the Drama was a Public and popular amusement. The Christian Revelation had no relation to Stage Plays; and I should as soon think of seeking in the New Testament the Pneumatic Philosophy, as an approval or disapproval of Dramatic performances.

Then remember all the accompaniments of the Stage, the fascinations of music, painting, action, oratory; and say, if when these are enlisted in the cause of fiction, they do not raise the passions above their proper tone, and thus induce a dislike to grave and serious subjects, and a distaste for all the milder and more necessary virtues of domestic life.

James, p. 38.

The Stage raises the passions above their proper tone, and thus induces a dislike to grave and serious subjects, which have nothing but their simplicity and importance to recommend them. Poetry, music, action, oratory, all enlisted in the cause of fiction, combine their influence to draw off the mind from the simple and the useful, while a passion for the romantic, the showy, and the splendid, is excited and increased. *Styles*, p. 100-1.

I might with as much reason doubt how a man could resume his Monday's work after his Sunday's excitement; but you know that even Jumpers and Shakers overget in twelve hours the physical and mental exhaustion of their sabbatical exercises.

Music, Poetry, Painting!!!

"The Man who has no Musick in his soul,
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus;
Let no such man be trusted.—Mark the Musick!

Merchant of Venice. Act v. sc. 1.

Says Sir William Temple, "he that is insensible to the charms of POETRY should take care to hide it, that it is not known; for fear he bring in question his good-nature, if not his understanding."* Cartoons of Raphael, Ma-

* Miscellanea. Part 2.

donnas of Guido and Morillo, Crucifixions of Caracci, start not from your canvas in scorn—Genius of Michael Angelo and Chantry, be not overcome with dismay!

13.

The arguments against the Stage are strengthened by a reference to the general habits of the performers, and the influence which their employment has in the formation of their Character, and here I may assert, that the sentiments of mankind have generally consigned this wretched class of beings to infamy. The story of the unfortunate Laberius exhibits in a strong point of view, the odium which was attached to the profession of an Actor among the Romans. Compelled by Cæsar, at an advanced period of life, to appear on the Stage to recite some of his own works, he felt his character as a Roman Citizen insulted and disgraced, and in some affecting verses spoken on the occasion, he incensed the audience against the Tyrant, by whose mandate he was obliged to appear before them. "After having lived (said he) sixty years with honour, I left my house this morning a Roman Knight, but shall return to it this Evening an infamous Stage player. Alas! I have lived a day too long."

James, p. 40.

Another collateral argument of some importance against the Stage may be drawn from the general Character of Players. The sentiments of mankind have ever consigned this wretched class of beings to infamy. The Story of the unfortunate Laberius exhibits in a strong point of view the odium which was attached to the profession of an Actor among the Romans. Compelled by Cæsar, at an advanced period of life, to appear on the Stage to recite some of his own works, he felt his character as a Roman Citizen insulted and disgraced, and in some affecting verses spoken on the occasion, he incensed the audience against the Tyrant by whose mandate he was obliged to appear before them. "After having lived (said he) sixty years with honour, I left my house this morning a Roman Knight, but shall return to it this Evening, an infamous Stage player. Alas! I have lived a day too long."

Styles, p. 112.

You here stand fully committed. The Profession of an Actor among the Greeks was most honourable. "At Athens the Actors were generally persons of good birth and education, for the most part Orators and Poets of the first rank."* Cornelius Nepos asserts the same;† and Kings themselves performed on the Grecian Stage. But to your character of the *Roman* Actor. You should be informed that originally the Stage performers in Rome were foreigners, and consequently not entitled to the rights of citizenship. It is also remarkable, that the only class of Roman Actors, deserving the name of Actors in the modern acceptation of the term, the Performers of the *Fabulæ Attellanæ*, had privileges beyond the ordinary class of Stage performers. Valerius Maximus (lib. 2. c. 4.) gives as a reason, the superior character of the drama. In the virtuous times of the Republic, we find an exception in their favour. (Livy. l. vii. c. 2.) In the Laws of the Emperors we find they are protected and privileged. (Rosin. Rom. Ant. l. 5. c. 6,-2.) The application also of Theatrical money, even to the service of the public,

* Kennet.

† Nulla Lacedæmoni tam est nobilis vidua, quæ non ad scenam eat mercede conducta, &c. In scenam verò prodire, et populo esse spectaculo, nemini in eisdem gentibus fuit turpitudini. *In Pref.*

was considered scandalous and a capital crime. The "story of the unfortunate Laberius," is a very unfortunate one for you, as you may discover even in Lempriere's Classical Dictionary; it is no more proof for you than His present most gracious Majesty forcing Mr. Horace Twiss on the Stage to recite his drama, would be proof against the character of English Actors.

You would have us believe that the Roman Actor was infamous, when Roscius the pride of Rome, received the munificent remuneration of a thousand denarii per diem, and when Æsopus bequeathed £200,000. to his son!* Of these two distinguished Actors I have before written as the bosom friends of Cicero, and of their most distinguished cotemporaries. But the connection of Roscius with Tully deserves a more particular mention. It is a most interesting anecdote that this great Tragedian, during Cicero's exile, pronounced several passages with so eloquent a pathos on the banishment of Telamon, applicable to the Orator's misfortunes, that the whole audience burst with enthusiastic feeling, and Cicero himself acknowledges that his return was greatly facilitated by the effect. When Roscius was the object of prosecution, Cicero thus speaks on

* Macrobius. Saturn, lib. iii. 14.

behalf of his friend—"Has Roscius defrauded his friend? Can he possibly be guilty of this? Who by heavens, (I boldly speak it) has more sincerity than he has art, more integrity than professional skill, who by the judgment of the Roman People is a better man than he is a Player, the worthiest of all men to tread the Stage by reason of his superiority, and the most worthy to fill the Magistracy on account of his virtues."* Cicero says that Roscius not only knew how to represent virtue to his auditors better than any other man, but was more moral in his private life. Nor were these the hired praises of an Advocate; after the death of Roscius he thus gratefully eulogises him.—"Where, amongst us, is the mind so barbarous, where the breast so flinty, as of late, to be unaffected with the death of Roscius? He died, indeed, an old man; but a man whose art and elegance seemed to challenge immortality to his person. Was he then so universally esteemed and loved for the inimitable management of his limbs? And are we to overlook the divine enthusiasm of ge-

* Roscius socium fraudavit? Potest hoc homini huic hæerere peccatum? qui, medius fidius, (audacter dico) plus fidei quam artis, plus veritatis quam disciplinæ, possidet in se: quem Populus Romanus meliorem virum, quam Histriionem, esse arbitratur; qui ita dignissimus est scenâ propter artificium, ut dignissimus sit curiâ propter abstinentiam.
Pro. Roscio Comædo.

"nius and the glowing energy of the soul?"
Orat. Archias.

The names of Æsopus and Roscius are not exceptions; you are totally ignorant of the history of the Stage or you might discover in a learned old tract, "The Actor's Vindication, containing three brief treatises, viz. Their Antiquity, Their Antient Dignity, The true use of their Quality, by Thomas Heywood, *London*, 1612," numerous Roman Actors whose celebrity and respectability are recorded.

14.

As to the feelings of modern times, is there a family in Britain of the least moral worth even amongst the middling class of Tradesmen, which would not feel itself disgraced if any one of its members were to embrace this profession? I ask if the Characters of players is not in general so loose as to make it matter of surprize to find one that is truly moral? A performer, whether male or female, that maintains an unspotted reputation, is considered as an exception from the general rule. Their employment, together with the indolent line of life to which it leads, is most contaminating to their morals. The habit of assuming a feigned Character, and exhibiting unreal passions must have a very injurious effect on their principles of integrity and truth. They are

It is impossible to entertain respect for a player, and there is not a family of any consideration in Britain, which would not count it an indelible disgrace if any of its members were to embrace this dishonourable profession.

Styles, p. 113.

In the second place, as players have been generally persons of loose morals, so their employment directly leads to the corruption of the heart. It is an allowed principle among Critics, that no human passion or character can be well represented unless it be felt: this they call entering into the spirit of the part. Now I suppose the following Philosophical remark is equally certain, that every human passion, especially when strongly felt, gives a certain mo-

so accustomed to represent the arts of intrigue and gallantry, that it is little to be wondered at, if they should practise them in the most unrestrained manner.

James, p. 40-1.

dification to the blood and spirits, and makes the whole frame more susceptible of its return. Therefore whoever has justly and strongly acted human passions that are vicious, will be more prone to these same passions: and indeed with respect to the whole Character, they will soon be in reality what they have so often seemed to be.

Witherspoon on the Stage.

If I granted the truth of the whole of this paragraph (which I am not disposed to do of any part) it would prove nothing against actors different from the rest of the world, according to *your* description of society. I might well say, with the Author of an old Defence of Plays and Players,* to a charge “that Actors were not *Saints*”—“If the *major* part of them fall under a different character, it is the general unhappiness of Mankind that the *most* are the *worst*!” But as far as opinion goes, Shakespeare, whose judgment and sagacity you must allow at least to equal your own, says that “Players are the abstract and brief Chronicles of the times,”* “whose end, both at the first, and now, was, and is, to hold as ’twere the mirror up to nature.”† On the subject of the *rank* of an Actor in British Society, you

* *Historia Histrionica*. 1699.

* Hamlet. Act ii. sc. 2.

† Idem. Act iii. sc. 2.

as a man of the world, and looking back to your own origin, cannot but know that *income* is the general measure of *respectability* and reciprocal worldly entertainment. You of course know that Players, usually have but small stipends; but trying the stage by the test of income, I unhesitatingly assert that Players in general *do* occupy their relative rank in society; and that the chief ornaments of the Stage are respectfully received in society far above their means of return: I do not mean by the Blue Stocking proprietor of a London party of *odd people*, or by the purse-proud Citizen who bribes with good dinners and wines every *lion* of the day; but I mean by the highest *intellectual* society of London and Edinburgh, and amongst the most literary and accomplished Nobility. The Kembles and Siddons's, Mr. Bannister, Mr. Young, Mr. Kean, Mrs. Beecher, Mrs. Bunn, Miss Kelly, Mrs. Davison, Mr. Liston, Mr. Mathews, Mr. Munden, and Mr. Macready, are my proofs—if you have not met them, and are ignorant of this, your want of knowledge of the fact is no proof against it, but merely that you do not know any thing of that high class of society to which they are so honorably admitted.

If you were to investigate the origin of the English Player you would discover that he was, as it were, created for the pleasure of royalty; that Royalty itself has performed on the Stage. The Drama took its rise in the schools. As early as the year 1430 the choristers of Maxtoke Priory, in this county, acted a play every year;* and I hope the public will soon be favoured with some curious history of the Coventry Plays, by the accomplished and liberal antiquary of that town, Mr. Thomas Sharpe. The children of St. Paul's, Westminster, and Windsor, acted before Queen Elizabeth, and towards the latter end of her reign the Stage assumed its present established order of actors.† Do you not know, that if the old players, *Heminge* and *Condell*, had not bought the manuscript works of SHAKESPEARE, those treasures might never have been printed? Did you never hear of *Burbage* the friend of Shakspeare, or of *Lowin* his pupil and the "gentle friend" of Massinger? The early dramatic writers were almost to a man gentlemen

* Warton's History of Poetry.

† It is a singular fact, that *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, in some respects the most exceptionable of Shakespeare's dramas—that is to say, in the eyes of the Prynites—was specially bespoken of our great bard by Queen Elizabeth, who wished to see Falstaff in Love! And her pious father first formed a company of actors for the amusement of "his many Queens."

of family and education—SHAKESPEARE, perhaps, was an exception; the POET of NATURE was truly *ex se natus* born of himself; *his* genius was not the heir-loom of a family.—But to quit these interesting times of early English literature, can you gravely make these *assertions* against the characters of modern actors, with the fact staring you in the face, that most of the ornaments and popular actors of the Stage are men of superior education? JOHN KEMBLE received his early initiation in letters at the Catholic Academy of Sedgely Park, in Staffordshire, and, from his extraordinary progress, was early sent to the University of Douay. Charles Kemble, by the generosity of his brother, was educated at Douay, and is an accomplished scholar and gentleman. Henry Siddons, born at Wolverhampton, was placed by the favour of the late Queen Charlotte, upon the foundation of the Charter House. Matthews and Young were at Merchant Taylor's. Elliston was educated at St. Paul's. Macready at Rugby, and Holman at Dr. Barrows', in Soho-square, where Morton, the dramatic writer, was likewise educated. Kean was partly educated and early distinguished at Eton. *Gentleman* Smith, so many years an ornament of Drury-lane, was at Eton; as was also Mr. Smith, who married a sister of the late Lord

Sandwich. Mr. Yates and Mr. Calvert, I believe, received University educations. Mr. Bunn, in his letter to you, has very justly noticed the coronets whose honours are maintained by the virtues of many female nobility formerly on the stage. No coronet could add to the pre-eminence of MRS. SIDDONS; titular honour would only obscure a name which will go down to posterity the proverb of all that nature and art could combine in an incomparable actress.*

As to the present moral character of the English Stage it may be boldly asserted that at no time was it so unblemished.

The Rev. James Plumtree, who wrote "Four Discourses on subjects relating to the amusements of the Stage" (octavo, 1819,) and who is by no means the unqualified panegyrist of the stage, states (p. 211) that the Managers of the Nottingham, Lincoln, and Norwich Theatres (the establishments within the author's

* In the dedication of "The Regent, a tragedy, London, 1788," by Bertie Bertie Greatheed, Esq. a drama of great literary and dramatic merit, the following elegant compliment is paid to Mrs. Siddons:—"Through your means it is that this tragedy is now before the public: you procured me the intimacy of your brother; you enabled me to profit by his very refined taste and perfect knowledge of the drama. Would there were some language sacred to sincerity, in which I might express, without a suspicion of compliment, the true sense I have of your perfections! But there is none." It was in this county, at Guy's Cliff, that Mrs. Siddons, in early life, was the attendant of Lady Elizabeth Greatheed, the mother of the present possessor of a spot, in the simple language of Leland, described as "a place meet for the Muses."

neighbourhood) would not allow a person of bad character to enter their companies. The Bath Theatre has been long conducted with the most exemplary distinction as to the character of its performers; and some of the most distinguished ornaments of the London Stage have come from this theatre.

I need not further enumerate the many distinguished names on the London and Edinburgh boards. It is true that some instances of immorality occasionally occur; they do in every class of society, but be it remembered, that the Actor is a public character immediately under the public eye; and that the personal charms of Actresses are certainly exposed to the temptations held out by rank and riches. That players may be the object of the "foul wind" of scandal is well illustrated by your echoes of Dr. Styles. That the character of the Stage was formerly that of profligacy, however, is no more evidence that it *now* is so, than that because ecclesiastics once professed temperance and celibacy, practising sensuality, *therefore* the Clergy of the present day are to be denounced for the same vices.

I cannot conclude this defence of the Stage against your works, without a just tribute to the character of the BIRMINGHAM THEATRE. Mr. Bunn, the lessee, is a gentleman of considerable talent and acquirement; he has been

Manager of Drury-lane, for which you must allow him no ordinary mind and judgment; and his company here is of a very high professional character. Of Mrs. Bunn it is impossible to speak too highly; her professional reputation requires no eulogy, but it is eclipsed by the amiable and maternal excellencies of her private character.

Public report may be allowed an unexceptionable witness for the private character of *all*. Mr. Shuter and Mr. *Warde* possess very great histrionic talent. The latter, by birth, education, and profession, is a *Gentleman*; he has, I understand, bled in the cause of his country; and if I mistake not, he will, ere long, be the first tragedian of the London Stage.

Can you also have been ignorant, or have you forgotten, that the Italian Opera has been of late years conducted by a Committee of Noblemen—that Drury-lane also has been managed by several of the first Nobility and Commoners of the highest character and talent?

On the charge of players “assuming a feigned character,” certain I am that not one of those so honourably named, would have appropriated the works of other men. Shakespeare may have stolen a deer of Justice Shallow, but would never have *borrowed* a Sermon of Latimer, or printed a Play not his own.

You have not interwoven even a single new anecdote in support of your "assertions," but retail the old exploded stories of Whitfield, on "the best authority,"—copying two whole pages verbatim. I shall not encumber my sheets with such nonsense, but only give your introductory sentence to shew with what activity you follow Dr. Styles.

15.

SHUTER, whose facetious powers convulsed whole audiences with laughter, and whose companionable qualities often "set the table in a roar," was a miserable being. The following anecdote, told from the best authority, will confirm this assertion; and I am afraid, were we at all acquainted with many of his profession, we should find that his case is by no means singular.

James, p. 41.

SHUTER, whose facetious powers convulsed whole audiences with laughter, and whose companionable qualities often "set the table in a roar," was a miserable being. The following anecdote, told from the best authority, will confirm this assertion; and I am afraid, were we at all acquainted with many of his profession, we should find that his case is by no means singular.

Styles, p. 122.

It is quite sufficient for this story that it rests on the authority of John Whitfield, and there it is likely to rest.

16.

To send young people therefore to the play house to form their manners, is to expect they will learn truth from liars, virtue from profligates, and modesty from harlots.

James, p. 43.

It seems to have been a sentiment of this kind that led a certain author to say, that to send young people to the Theatre to form their manners, is to expect that they will learn virtue from profligates, and modesty from harlots.

Witherspoon on the Stage.

No observation is required on this extract: the Readers will judge between you and me, Sir, whose assertions are supported by facts.

17.

Can it then be right, even on the supposition that we could escape the moral contagion of the Stage, to support a set of our fellow-creatures in idleness, and in a profession which leads to immorality, licentiousness, and profligacy?

James, p. 44.

As the profession of an actor is ignominious, and as it has uniformly debased the human character, what virtuous mind will contribute to the support of a class of men so miserable, and whose very employment must render them contemptible?

Styles, p. 121.

I shall make but *one* observation on this: you are grievously mistaken on the supposition that an Actor's life is that of "idleness:" it is a Profession of the severest labour and the deepest study.

I have thus subdivided and answered this notable Chapter of the "Christian Father's Present." You consistently close it with the assertion of Styles—viz. that you know instances (could you but be freed from the Confessor's seal of secrecy) of the moral ruin of many who have frequented Theatres. I think, after this exposure of your retailing Dr. Styles, I may without illiberality *doubt* this assertion; and place it to the account of those "pious frauds" which are considered lawful warnings by some, however mean by others.

I shall make no further mention of *Doctor Styles*: The Reader may refer to “a few short remarks upon this sacred and silly gentleman,” in the *Edinburgh Review*, vol. xiv. p. 48,* and notwithstanding the insignificance of the subject, the perusal of the Review will amply repay in wit and humour the dulness of the object: The Reviewers very justly say that his everlasting text is, “*Whoever is unfriendly to Methodism is an Infidel and an Atheist.*” Be it so. Throughout these barefaced plagiarisms you have nowhere expressed your obligations to Dr. Styles. You do partially towards *other* persons from whom you have borrowed in your different chapters of the “*Present*,” it is therefore fairly to be concluded that you intentionally omitted reference to Dr. Styles, or marks of quotation; that is to say, you have passed *his* strictures on the Stage as your own. You certainly do, in two instances, recommend Dr. Styles: in *Youth Warned*, in a note you write, “I recommend all who wish to judge of the tendency of the Theatre, to read an Essay, by Dr. Styles.” In a note at the end of the sixteenth Chapter of the “*Present*” you also write, “I most earnestly recommend

* This learned *Doctor*, then Mr. *John Styles*, in reply to the *Edinburgh Review*, gave a learned dissertation on the Reviewer's word *Kime*, a misprint for *Knife*; mistaking the said *Kime* for an Hindoo instrument of torture!

to all young persons, who have any doubts upon this subject, or any taste for theatrical representations, the perusal of an admirable treatise on this subject, by Dr. Styles"—this you were well aware was a recommendation little likely to be taken: your Congregation have *hitherto* had a sufficient trust in the supposed originality of your own lucubrations; and who can ever suppose you would seriously recommend a book of which you had printed the entire substance?

But I shall now shew that this is not your only offence against the code of Literature.

Subsequently to the publication of Mr. Bunn's Letter to you, in answer to your attack on the Theatre and the character of the performers, you published a second Tract—"THE SCOFFER ADMONISHED, being the substance of two Sermons preached at Carr's-lane Meeting-house, July 18, and August 1, 1824." To this publication you prefixed a Preface, of which the following is an extract:—

"The outline of the following Sermon was drawn up nearly a month ago, and consequently before it was possible for the author to anticipate the circumstances which have lately occupied so much of the public attention in Birmingham. To these events the discourse bears no other relation whatever, than that of a coincidence, seasonable it must be confessed, but altogether uncontrived."

Under these circumstances, and repeating your attack on the Theatre in the 16th page with increased rancour,* you could not reasonably expect people to *believe* that you had *not* a reference to Mr. Bunn—at all events your Preface has. You might, however, safely and honestly assert, that the “outline of the following Sermons was drawn up nearly a month ago:” verily, it was, in the reign of King William, and by *Archbishop Tillotson*, a dignitary of the Church of England!

You entitle your Sermon “The Scoffer Admonished.” Tillotson entitles his “The Folly of Scoffing at Religion.”—You both use the same text, 2 Peter, iii. 3.—You subdivide both your Sermons into three heads, allowing for a little dexterous substitution, as follows:—

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. I shall give you a representation of the nature of the vice itself. | 1. Consider the natures of the sin here mentioned. |
| 2. I shall consider the causes of scoffing.—p. 22. | 2. The character of the persons that are charged with the guilt of this sin. |
| 3. Let me now exhibit to you the characters of this vice.—p. 28. | 3. I shall represent to you the heinousness and the aggravations of this vice. |
| | <i>James.</i> <i>Tillotson.</i> |

You use all the *texts* used by him, and few others. You open your Sermons with the

* “But it is now time to enquire where and when the practice of scoffing is indulged in.

In the Theatre, where, besides the mockery of the claims and obligations of religion, that runs through more or less the whole contexture of

same sentiments and nearly in the same language.

At the time of St. Peter's writing this Epistle, the disciples of Christ were exposed to the attacks of the Epicureans among the Gentiles, and the Sadducees among the Jews, both of whom ridiculed the doctrines of the resurrection of the dead, the general judgment, the destruction of the world, and a future state of rewards and punishments.

James, p. 1-2.

These it seems were a sort of people that derided our Saviour's prediction of his coming to judge the world.

In those times there was a common persuasion among Christians, that the day of the Lord was at hand.

So that the principles of these men seem to be much the same with those of the Epicureans, who denied the providence of God and the immortality of men's souls, and consequently a future judgment, which should sentence men to rewards and punishments in another world.

Tillotson.

You then write, copying and paraphrasing Tillotson—

It was said by an infidel of former times, *that when reason is against a man, then will a man be against reason*: and it may with equal, if not greater propriety, be said, that when religion is against a man, then will a man be against religion. The truth and the principles of revelation are enemies to pride of intellect and depravity of heart ;

I remember it is the saying of one who hath done more by his writings to debauch the age with atheistical principles than any man that lives in it, *That when reason is against a man, then a man will be against reason*. I am sure this is the true account of such men's enmity to religion— religion is against them, and therefore they

dramatic representation, plays are acted which were originally written, and are still performed with the obvious design of bringing all scriptural piety into contempt. The theatre is the very seat of the scornful, where he sits first as a learner, till he becomes proficient enough to appear in the character of a teacher. It may be very truly affirmed, that if infidels teach men to argue against religion, players instruct them to laugh at it."

and it is matter of little surprise, that they who cannot be reconciled to humility and purity, should scorn the system which enforces such virtues.

James, p. 26.

set themselves against religion. The principles of religion, &c. are terrible enemies to wicked men, and this is that which makes them kick against religion, &c. talk profanely, and speak against religion, &c.

Tillotson.

Again, you paraphrase the Archbishop :—

The sum of the whole matter is— a man says there is no God, because he wishes there were none, &c ; he is an infidel because he is a sinner; he is a scoffer because he is an infidel, &c.

James, p. 27.

The sum is, the true cause why any man is an atheist, is because he is a wicked man. Religion would curb him in his lusts, and therefore he casts it off, and puts all the scorn upon it he can, &c.

Tillotson.

In the following sentences you copy him nearly verbatim. The reader will remark an asterisk and marks of quotation at the *foot* of your paragraph ; of that hereafter.

1. *Let no man think the worse of religion, or any of its doctrines, because some are so bold as to despise them ;* for tis no disparagement to any person or thing to be laughed at; but only to deserve to be so. The most grave and serious matters in the world are liable to be abused. A sharp wit may find something in the wisest or holiest man, whereby to expose him to the contempt of injudicious people. The gravest book that ever was written, may be made ridiculous by applying the sayings of it to a foolish purpose. A jest may be obtruded upon any thing; and therefore, no man ought

2. Let no man think the worse of religion, because some are so bold as to despise and deride it. For 'tis no disparagement to any person or thing to be laughed at, but to deserve to be so. The most grave and serious matters in the whole world are liable to be abused. It is a known saying of Epictetus, "that every thing hath two bundles;" by which he means that there is nothing so bad but a man may lay hold of something or other about it that will afford matter of excuse and extenuation, nor nothing so excellent but a man may fasten upon something or other belonging to it,

to have less reverence for the principles of religion, because profane wits can *cast jokes* upon them. Nothing is more easy than to take particular phrases and expressions out of the best book in the world, and to abuse them by forcing an odd and ridiculous sense upon them. But no wise man will think a good book foolish for this reason, but the man that abuseth; nor will he think that to which every thing is liable, to be a just exception against any thing. At this rate we must *contemn* all things; but surely the better and the shorter way is to *despise* those who would bring any thing worthy into contempt.”*

James, p. 44.

whereby to reduce it. A sharp wit may find something in the wisest man, whereby to expose him to the contempt of injudicious people. The gravest book that ever was written, may be made ridiculous by applying the sayings of it to a foolish purpose. For a jest may be obtruded upon any thing. And, therefore, no man ought to have the less reverence for the principles of religion, or for the *Holy Scriptures*, because idle and profane wits can *break jokes* upon them. Nothing is so easy as to take particular phrases and expressions out of the best book in the world, and to abuse them by forcing an odd and ridiculous sense upon them. But no wise man will think a good book foolish for this reason, but the man that abuseth it; nor will he *esteem* that to which every thing is liable, to be a just exception against any thing. At this rate we must *despise* all things; but surely the better and the shorter way is to *contemn* those who would bring any thing that is worthy into contempt.

Tillotson.

In a note following this *asterisk* you write *See Archbishop Tillotson's Sermon on Scoffing at Religion*. The inverted commas† are errors of the press, being inser-

† Seeing a *second* edition of the *Scoffer Admonished*, I bought it with a view to discover if this error of the compositor was rectified, and the inverted commas put out: but on comparing the reputed second

ted by the compositor in consequence of seeing a reference to an author. *You* could not mean to quote this passage—first, because the two first lines form a subdivision of your sermon: secondly, because if the reader examines the two paragraphs by you and Tillotson, it will be seen that you do not literally cite all, or correctly, the words of the Archbishop; and lastly, because when you write “see Archbishop Tillotson’s Sermon,” that monosyllable is always applied by you when you refer to, not when you quote from, a work; in the latter case you invariably omit it. The reader will perceive, by reference to your sermon in p. 15, half a page marked as quotation, but where you borrowed it you do not say; every syllable may be found in Tillotson, but you did not wish it to be discovered. I do not think it necessary to load my pages with further proofs of your plagiarisms. If required, I can point out various others in this and your different works, from Tillotson, who thus seems to be a favourite author with you. The reader may find them particularly in Tillotson’s “Certainty of a future Judgment;” in the “Wisdom

edition with the first, I find that, excepting an alteration in the Title page with the addition of the words “second edition,” they are one and the same, with all the typographical errors, there having been but *one* edition; does not this equal if not surpass the *puffs* of the Play Bill?

of being Religious;" and in "The Evil of Corrupt Communication."—In the latter sermon, whence some passages are borrowed by you for the Scoffer Admonished, you pass over the Archbishop's Reflections on the Licentiousness of the Stage in the time of Charles II. because in principle he commends the Theatre—therefore, *this* extract would not do for your purpose.*

That you should occasionally use the best sermons of old Divines in your manuscript or extempore Sermons, is sanctioned by the custom of the first modern Clergymen: I have even seen a venerable and learned Divine of this County read from a printed sermon, and occasionally comment on the passages and the Author; but *printing* and *publishing* another man's Sermon as your own, is *plagiarism*: doing this with Tillotson may be a proof of your taste in the selection; and as Tillotson is not

* "I shall only speak a few words concerning Plays, which as they are now ordered among us, are a mighty reproach to the Age and Nation. To speak against them in general, may be thought too severe, and that which the present age cannot so well brook, and would not perhaps be so just and reasonable; because it is very possible, they might be so framed and governed by such rules, as not only to be innocently diverting, but instructing and useful, to put some vices and follies out of countenance, which cannot perhaps be so decently reprov'd, nor so effectually exposed and corrected any other way. But as the Stage now is, they are intolerable, and not fit to be permitted in a *civilized*, much less in a *Christian* Nation, &c."

Tillotson. *The Evil of Corrupt Communication.*

an author known to your congregation, it was certainly a safe quarter to go to.—You may well have time to preach so often, and to preach *extempore*, that is to say, to get a sermon by rote; and your pulpit oratory is thus reduced to something very like *acting*—the graces of diction, gesture, and action.

I cannot pass by your frequent reflections on the CATHOLICS,* such as “the monkish legends of Popery, prurient as they are,” &c. without censure. I do not think that these aspersions come with a good grace from the Minister of an unpopular sect; one, who like the Catholics, labours under the stigma and injustice of Civil Disabilities for Conscience sake. Why should you keep alive these unnecessary and vulgar prejudices, and perpetuate uncharitable feeling? You cannot but know that the modern Catholics neither believe nor profess to believe many of the dogmas imputed to their creed; that they encourage learning; that many excellent and pious works are published by their Clergy; and that the Priests and the Laity afford examples of virtue we might all profit by.† You

* “There are a hundred and twenty Millions following the *Papal Beast*!”
The Christian Father's Present. vol. 2. p. 60.

† See some noble and truly Christian remarks on this subject in Parr's Characters of Fox, by the distinguished Editor. “I shall never cease to explore the good as well as the bad effects of the Papal power.

ought to know that the errors and vices of antient Catholicism originated in the darkness of the times and mistaken zeal; that the duration of *power* is the general measure of abuse by all parties—and God forbid that your Sect should at any time possess the same means of cursing Christendom, which many corrupt Governments, *adopting Catholicism*, exercised over the pure religion of Jesus. I cannot but think that you might borrow with advantage, and with far less danger of detection, some discourses of Massillon, Fenelon, Fleury, Pascal or Bossuet.

It was in Catholic countries, in Catholic intellect and heart, that the embers of Learning were kept alive in the “dark ages.” In Warton’s first Dissertation on the Origin of Romantic *Fiction* in Europe, you may trace the progressive march of the Eastern Literature, which paved the way for the more sub-

in Ages, when the rude barbarism and military ferocity of European nations seem to have been checked by no restraints more efficacious than that power, so far as history has set before us the order of events, or the operation of causes. I shall always look back with triumph upon the contributions which foreign Catholics have made to the Arts, to Science, and to every branch of polite learning whether ancient or modern. I shall always remember that by the monastic institutions were preserved to us the means of acquiring that knowledge which co-operating, sometimes from accident and sometimes from design, with other circumstances has enabled men in all countries, whether Catholic or Protestant, to become progressive in the better use of their faculties, and the better discharge of their duties.” vol. 2 p. 620.

lime imagination of the Italian Poets and their disciple Spenser. The Speaking Pantomime, the Improvisatori, and extempore Comedy, were the nurseries of the Epic Poets of the middle ages.* Do you not know that Milton first projected *Paradise Lost* as a *Drama*, and that his original idea for this poem was from a comedy or opera of Andreini? The literature of Italy, Germany, Holland, France, and Great Britain, teems with evidence of the beauty and usefulness of the early Fiction. But the tales of the Troubadours and the Minstrels can have no attraction for you or Dr. Styles. Dante, Ariosto, and Tasso, are strangers to you.

The early *Mysteries* and *Moralities* were not without their use. The Ecclesiastics performed them, the open plain was the stage, at the expence of the Corporations and municipal authorities. (see Warton and D'Israeli.) By a manuscript in the Harleian library, quoted by Warton, it appears that they were thought to contribute so much to the information and instruction of the People, that one of the

* "One Summer Salvator Rosa joined a Company of young persons who were curiously addicted to the making of *Commedie all' improvviso*. In the midst of a vineyard they raised a rustic stage, under the direction of one Mussi, who enjoyed some literary reputation, particularly from his Sermons preached in Lent."

Passeri's Life of Salvator Rosa.

Popes granted a pardon of one thousand days to every person who resorted peaceably to the plays performed in the Whitsun-week at Chester. Whatever were the vulgarities and evils of these representations, they were of essential service in times when the People were not only forbidden to read the Sacred Scriptures, when printing was not invented, but when the Ecclesiastics themselves were not *Clerks*. Warton has given the following elegant and philosophical tribute to their use—"not only in teaching the great truths of Scripture to men who could not read the Bible, but in abolishing the barbarous attachment to military games and the bloody contentions of the Tournament, which had so long prevailed as the sole species of popular amusement. Rude and even ridiculous as they were, they softened the manners of the People by diverting the Public attention to spectacles in which the mind was concerned, and by creating a regard for other arts than those of bodily strength and savage valour."

I shall terminate these remarks on Dramatic and Poetical literature, with the following extract from Goldsmith:—

"It was the Poet who harmonized the ungrateful accents of his native dialect, who lifted it above common conversation, and

shaped its rude combinations into order. From him the Orator formed a style, and though Poetry first rose out of Prose, in turn it gave birth to every prosaic excellence. Musical period, concise expression, and delicacy of sentiment, were all excellencies derived from the Poet; in short he not only preceded but formed the Orator, Philosopher and Historian."

It is just to observe that many Dramatic Writers have reprobated the prostitution of the Stage to licentious works. In the Preface to Ben Jonson's *Fox** you may see some beautiful sentiments on the purity of the Drama. Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith, Young, Addison, and numerous other Dramatic Authors, have denounced in the strongest language immoral Dramas. I am no friend to those slang pieces which bastardize and corrupt the language: and although the beauties of many old English Dramatic Writers redeem their faults and obliterate their errors, yet I agree with Goldsmith, that—"in fact the revival of those pieces of forced humour, far-fetched conceit and unnatural hyperbole, which have been ascribed to Shakespeare, is rather gibbeting than raising a statue to his memory."—But is it

* "The *Fox*, the *Alchemist* and *Silent Woman*,
Done by Ben Jonson, and outdone by no Man."

therefore that with Gothic barbarity, I am to excommunicate the Drama from Education and Literature? Bishop Andrews in his Preface to his Lectures on the eloquence of the *Pulpit* justly observes “that the abuse of *it* is worse than that of the Stage, for as faith cometh by hearing, so doth infidelity”—but should I therefore denounce the Clerical Profession?

You are particularly fond of going abroad to attack and indiscriminately denounce “foreign infidels.” You are perhaps not aware that Styles uses Rousseau’s *Emilius*, and you borrow it second hand. Voltaire is the particular object of your fulminations: whatever might be the inconsistency or the irreligion of some of the writings of this extraordinary man, he was the enemy of Priestcraft; and in his volumes on Toleration and Commentary on Beccaria’s *Essay on Crimes and Punishments* he exhibits himself the valuable friend of philanthropy and human nature. And certain I am, from the following sentiments, that *he* would not appropriate to his own fame and profit the writings of any other man.

“PLAGIARISM. It is said that this word is derived from the Latin word ‘*plaga*,’ and that it signifies the condemnation to the scourge of those who sold freemen for slaves.

This has nothing in common with the plagiarism of authors, who sell not men either enslaved or free. They only for a little money occasionally sell themselves. When an Author sells the thoughts of another man, for his own, the larceny is called Plagiarism. The true plagiarist is he who gives the works of another for his own, who inserts in his rhapsodies long passages from a good book, *a little modified*. The enlightened reader, seeing this patch of cloth of gold upon a blanket, soon detects the bungling purloiner.*

For myself I shall make no remarks on Plagiarism. Some voluminous and learned Latin works have catalogued the offenders of olden times. *Richesource*, a French Author, taught it as an Art. In the "Mask of Orators" he gives ample rules how a man of the humblest ability may become a proficient by changing the mode of expression, by substituting and disguising—as the curious Reader may further see in D'Israeli's *Curiosities of Literature*, vol. 3.

I shall now close this exposé with a few brief observations on your divinity. I have no more business with your religious opinions than you have with mine. I shall therefore say nothing

* Dictionnaire Philosophique, par M. De Voltaire—*Art. Plagiat*.
Translation now publishing by J. and H. L. Hunt.

on *doctrines*. However we differ on these points, we profess and believe the same religion. We may differ on the *mode* of the Divine existence, but we both worship and trust in the same Great Parent of Mankind. We believe the same *message*, revealed by Jesus Christ, however we may differ on the character or former state of the *Messenger*. The day is past—never more to return, for the explosion of the volcano of Bigotry on the world. She may thunder and roll within her own bowels, but never will the burning lava of her eruptions devastate the Christian dominions of England.

I cannot terminate these pages without a condemnation of those horrid and unauthorised descriptions of “Hell” and the “Devil”—“the presence of a God whose eyes are as a flame of fire”—“rain fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest”—“that comprehensive but commonly abused word, Hell”—“the burning Lake, the soul plunged in its fiery billows”—“rushing to the fiery Lake in Hell,”* &c. which fill your pages. It was said of old, that preaching “damnation” to all outside a Church, was an ingenious mode of filling it. The Devil is one of your principal performers—one of your chief *Dramatis Personæ*. I have no doubt that

* JAMES *passim*.

because I do not believe in him, you will conceive me to be a Blasphemer and Atheist.— You ought to know, Sir, that this dogma is a dangerous temptation for the ignorant to peg their sins upon.—

“Bad as *he* is, the *Devil* may be abus'd,
Be falsely charged, and causelessly accused,
When men, unwilling to be blam'd alone,
Shift off those crimes on him which are their own.”

What can be the ground or motive of your shocking description of “Hell?” By the minutiae of the detail one would suppose that you had an inventory and plan of its domains. These vulgar “warnings” are the “men traps and spring guns” of your divinity. And to seek *thus* to *interest* the *Young* in Religion! It was the memorable saying of old Roger Ascham's Schoolmaster, “Love doth work more in a Childe for Virtue and Learning than Fear.” Is your doctrine that of Mercy and Salvation? “Is God powerful to kill and to destroy, to damne and to torment, and is he not powerful to save? Nay, it is the sweetest flowre in the garland of his attributes, it is the richest diamond in his crown of glory that he is *Mighty to save*; and this is farre more magnificent for him, than to be styled *Mighty to destroy*. What would you make the God of the whole world? Nothing but a cruell and dreadful

Erynnis, with curly fiery snakes about his head, and firebrands in his hands, thus governing the world? Surely this will make us either secretly to think that there is no God at all if he must needs be such, or else to wish heartily there were none!"*—REASON, which I consider the Magnetic needle of the Human Understanding, you proclaim its bane; although by the very use of it in controversial religion you recognise its necessity and lawfulness. It is the distinctive faculty of Man. Doubtless you will consider this a *blasphemous* opinion: but as Lord Bacon says, "it is no less impious to shut where God Almighty has opened, than to open where God Almighty has shut." Dugald Stewart, whom you recommend, most forcibly writes:—"Among the various forms which religious enthusiasm assumes, there is a certain prostration of the mind, which, under the specious disguise of a deep humility, aims at exalting the Divine perfections, by annihilating all the powers which belong to Human nature."

And Milton sings—

There wanted yet the master-work, the end
Of all yet done; a creature who, not prone
And brute as other creatures, but endued
With sanctity of REASON, might erect

* Cudworth. Sermon preached before the House of Commons, 31st of March, 1647.

His stature, and upright with front serene
 Govern the rest, self-knowing ; and from thence,
 Magnanimous, to correspond with Heaven ;
 But, grateful to acknowledge whence his good
 Descends, thither with heart, and voice, and eyes
 Directed in devotion, to adore
 And worship God supreme, who made him chief
 Of all his works.

I think you now know my Religion, if it is an object of interest or curiosity to you. I do not expect we shall agree, but I can agree to differ.

In conclusion I briefly beg, that as you cannot but see the impossibility of abolishing the Drama or the Stage, you will in future shape your animadversions to advance their purity, and to gain them over exclusively to the cause of Virtue and Rational Amusement.

I can honestly avow that my *sole* motive in this publication is the advancement of Virtue and Religion, and you will probably in future be secure against further notice from me. I trust that I have maintained the character of a Gentleman and a Christian, and that I have not treated you in these pages with greater severity than was necessary or your *publications* justify.

But it was not to be endured that the COUNTRY of WARWICK, which proudly boasts as natives, SHAKESPEARE, *Digby Lord Bristol*,

Fulke Greville Lord Brooke, Drayton, Somerville, and Southern, (though it has not the honour of giving birth to you,) should be insulted, and the sacred rights and reputation of the illustrious dead defamed.

I conclude with two items of advice: before you again publish "Presents," know that "Charity begins at Home;" and remember, as I have no doubt you will, Bramston's counsel—

"Steal not word for word, nor thought for thought,
For you'll be teaz'd to death, if you are caught!"

October 30, 1824.

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